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THE LIFE AND TIMES

OF

Saint Margaret,

QUEEN AND PATRONESS

OF

SCOTLAND.

By a Secular Priest.

"THE QUEEN THAT BORE THEE,
OFTENER UPON HER KNEES THAN ON HER FEET,
DIED EVERY DAY SHE LIVED."

LONDON : BURNS & OATES, LIMITED.

NEW YORK : CATHOLIC PUBLICATION SOCIETY COMPANY.

BURNS AND OATES, LTD., PRINTERS, LONDON, W.



Contents.

CHAP. I.

	PAGE
Birth of the Princess Margaret.—She spends her childhood in Hungary, at the Court of St. Stephen	1

CHAP. II.

St. Edward invites the Princess Margaret and her family to England.—At the Conquest they retire from England, and are driven by a storm into Scotland, where the Princess is married to King Malcolm III.	6
---	---

CHAP. III.

Barbarous condition of the Scotch.—Queen Margaret's prayers, charities, and love of mortification.—She obtains justice for the poor; and redeems many English captives taken in war.—Pilgrimage to St. Andrew's	10
---	----

CHAP. IV.

Queen Margaret's munificence to churches.—Her influence over her husband.—She encourages ceremony at Court.—And reforms public manners.—She promotes industry and commerce	17
--	----

CHAP. V.

The queen's family.—Their later history.—The queen persuades the Bishops to reform some abuses in religion.—She addresses them in Council. The Grace-Drink	22
--	----

A 2

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CHAP. VI.

- Queen Margaret feels a presentiment of her death.—Maleolm goes to war with England, and perishes.—The Queen expires in Edinburgh Castle, and is buried at Dunfermline 28

CHAP. VII.

- Beginning of devotion to Queen Margaret as a Saint.—Her canonisation.—And translation.—Her tomb a place of pilgrimage.—Cross Hill.—What became of her body after the Reformation.—Her head preserved, and sent to the Low Countries.—Her office inserted in the Roman Breviary.—Changes in the day set apart for her festival 23

CHAP. VIII.

- Memorials of St. Margaret in Scotland.—Her Chapel in Edinburgh Castle.—Her Well.—Queensferry.—Dunfermline.—Her Altar in Rome.—Conclusion 40

THE LIFE OF ST. MARGARET.

CHAPTER I.

Birth of the Princess Margaret.—She spends her childhood in Hungary, at the Court of St. Stephen.

EIGHT hundred years ago, the court of St. Edward the Confessor was the residence of a young princess, named Margaret, of whom few, beyond that court, knew anything. Her life, up to that time, had been a chequered one; if, indeed, we can properly call a life chequered which had been almost entirely passed in the dark shadow of misfortune. Long before she was born, her grandfather, Edmund Ironside, had been murdered, and his share of the kingdom of England seized by Canute the Dane. Her father and her uncle, the sons of the murdered king, were sent by the usurper to a powerful friend of his in Sweden, together with secret instructions that the unhappy boys should be put safely out of the way. Canute's friend seems to have had more conscience than Canute himself; and, instead of putting the poor children to death, he privately sent them away to the court of Stephen, king of Hungary,—probably the same Stephen as we find honoured as a

saint, with a festival, in September, every year. Indeed, before we have done with the life of this young princess, Margaret, we shall probably discover a strong family likeness between her mode of life and what passed every day at the court of St. Stephen.

Margaret's father and uncle, then, still mere boys, and thus rudely driven about the world, were kindly received by the king of Hungary. Edwin, the elder of the two, and the uncle of our young princess, did not live to be a man; but his brother Edward became so popular at the Hungarian court as to marry the queen's niece, Agatha, a daughter of Bruno, brother of the emperor St. Henry. Their union was blessed with three children:—Edgar, afterwards surnamed the Etheling; Christina, who lived to become Abbess of Wilton; and Margaret, the future queen of Scotland. From what is known of later events in her life, the date of her birth must have been somewhere between November 17th, 1046, and November 16th, 1047. By the time that she had become eminent enough to make people anxious to know its exact date, no one survived to give the information.

But, before Margaret was born, several changes had happened at the Court of England. Canute, at his death, had been succeeded first by one of his sons, and then by another; and when the second died, (1042), the English drove the Danes out of the kingdom, and looked about once more for a king of their own. If

they had known anything of the young grandson of Edmund Ironside, or if Hungary had not been so far from England, Margaret's father might now have recovered his rights, she might have been born in more prosperous circumstances, and the whole course of her future life might have been very different from what it actually became.

To understand what took place at this crisis in the affairs of England, we must remember that the father of Edmund Ironside was twice married. When Edmund's mother died, Ethelred, his father, married Emma, the Flower and the Pearl of Normandy, and the aunt of William, afterwards the conqueror. Her eldest son, Edward, became a favourite with the English; from his retreat in Normandy he had, for many years, watched the stormy course of events in his own country; and now that the Danes were gone, and the English in want of a king of their own, he stepped in, and secured the crown without difficulty. According to the laws of feudal succession, there can be no doubt that it belonged to Margaret's father, Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside's eldest son. Yet even our interest in all belonging to this young princess will hardly dispose us to regret an arrangement that gave St. Edward the Confessor to the throne of England; although that arrangement excluded the family of the younger Edward from its inheritance.

All those events happened before Margaret was

born. St. Edward did not invite his nephew from Hungary, as might have been expected, to reside in England. So it was that Margaret was born, and that she spent all her childhood at the Court of St. Stephen. A royal princess in exile, even although she may have kind friends about her, is a notable instance of human weakness.* Possessing only the name of rank, without its independence, and its other substantial attributes, excluded by the accident of her birth from those avenues to wealth, and influence, and station which are open to the inferior ranks of her countrywomen,—a poor and homeless princess might advantageously change places with the humblest lady in her kingdom. At the same time it must be remembered that, even in a worldly point of view, high position, and commanding influence are not generally good for the mind. There are few persons whom they do not more or less spoil; few characters which are not sensibly deteriorated by them. The direct tendency of an influential position is to foster habits of imperiousness and selfishness; many a gentle mind has been irremediably vulgarised by high elevation. Not that misfortune is without its peculiar and kindred dangers; but, on the whole, it is a better school for the character than the precincts of a reigning sovereign's court.

Our young princess was fortunate in her opportunities of mixing in a court where earthly rank was made more attractive by the practice of the loveliest virtues.

The king himself taught his courtiers, by his example, the duties of generosity towards the poor, and of tender sympathy with the sick; he was remarkable for the practice of prayer, and is said to have gained some of his temporal successes over his enemies on his knees. More especially he prayed that he might be permitted to see Hungary completely christianised before his death. His exertions with a view to that end were such as to earn for him the title of the Apostle of Hungary, and the permission of the Holy See, for himself and his successors, to have a cross carried before them in processions. Out of his tender devotion to the Mother of Jesus, he dedicated his kingdom to her; he took leave of this world on the day of her assumption, which he had taught his people to call Great Lady-day. Such a man could not fail to create an influence around him, of which even children like Margaret must have been sensible. Long after she had bidden adieu to Hungary and the home of her youth, and when she had entered on her own arduous Apostolate, she could not fail to remember the engaging lessons which, as a child, she had learnt from her father's royal friend and benefactor.

CHAPTER II.

St. Edward invites the Princess Margaret and her family to England.—At the Conquest they retire from England, and are driven by a storm into Scotland, where the Princess Margaret is married to King Malcolm III.

As time went on, and St. Edward felt himself growing old, without a child to whom he could transmit his crown, he resolved to invite his nephew, Edward, to come with his family to England, probably intending to receive him and entertain him as the future heir of the kingdom. The bishop of Worcester carried this invitation into Hungary, and the younger Edward acceded without difficulty to the wishes of his uncle. Margaret must have been about ten or eleven years old when her father returned, with all his family, to his native land. He did not long survive the change; and thus his only son, Edgar, the Etheling, became the heir presumptive of St. Edward. Now, it seemed as if fortune were at last about to favour our young princess; she was now more nearly in the position to which her royal descent entitled her; she seemed destined at no remote day to become the sister of the reigning monarch, with the bright future incident to her position opening before her. In other respects, too, she had lost nothing

by her change of residence from Hungary to England. She had left the Court of St. Stephen only to enter the Court of St. Edward, in which the bright example of the beautiful queen, Edith, was only surpassed by the life of her holy husband. The company of saints does not always, indeed, make saints; but where the disposition towards what was good was so decided as in the case of young Margaret, the society first of her uncle Stephen, and next of her granduncle Edward, must have powerfully assisted the tendency of her own mind to the practice of perfection.

During his early days of adversity, St. Edward had made a vow of pilgrimage to Rome. Afterwards, when he proposed to redeem his pledge, his counsellors strongly opposed it, representing to him the extreme danger of leaving his kingdom in those critical times, when several neighbouring states were watching their opportunity to snatch the crown of England from his head. He, therefore, solicited and obtained leave from Pope Leo IX. to compound for the remission of his vow, on certain conditions. One of these was that he should enlarge the Benedictine Monastery at Westminster. The work approached its close in the year 1065; and, on Holy Innocent's-day, the Abbey-church was dedicated with great ceremony to the service of God, in honour of his blessed apostle St. Peter. St. Edward had been declining in health for some time before, and was unable to be present at this great cere-

mony, Queen Edith, therefore, represented her husband on the occasion. Our young Margaret, now nineteen years of age, was one of the ornaments of the court on that day. Within a few weeks she took part in the second pageant which that venerable abbey has witnessed; within a few weeks she accompanied Queen Edith, as the holy remains of St. Edward were carried to their last resting place.

Edgar, the Etheling, was now by right king of England. But he was no match for the rough and unscrupulous soldiers who coveted his crown. Harold, son of the late Godwin, Earl of Kent, and brother of Queen Edith, at once laid claim to it, on the pretence that it had been bequeathed to him by St. Edward. William, Duke of Normandy, also made a similar claim, on a similar pretence; and, soon after, landing in England with an army, in support of his pretensions, he defeated and killed Harold in the memorable battle of Hastings, and thus at one blow became master of the kingdom. A faint but unavailing attempt was made to support the claims of Edgar; but it was soon abandoned as hopeless, and the dark clouds of misfortune again gathered round the princess Margaret and her family. Her brother, finding nothing but humiliations in store for him if he remained in England, prepared to return to Hungary with his mother and his sister Margaret. Christina, it seems, had by this time left her family to follow the life of a nun. Margaret, then, with her

mother and brother sailed from England, a few months after the battle of Hastings, intending again to claim the hospitality of the Hungarian court. Providence, however, had very different designs for the refugees. A storm overtook them on their short sea-voyage ; they were blown out of their course into the Frith of Forth, in Scotland, and found a harbour of refuge on the coast of Fifeshire, a good many miles from the mouth of the Frith, at a place which was afterwards called St. Margaret's Bay, or St. Margaret's Hope.

A few years before this event, the crown of Scotland had been recovered by Malcolm, the third sovereign of the name, called also Cean-more, or Great-head. The tragical end of his father Duncan has obtained a wide celebrity from the genius of our immortal Shakspeare. Young Malcolm fled from the usurper, Macbeth, and found an honourable retreat in England, with St. Edward, who further assisted him with an army, under the command of Siward, Earl of Northumberland. The treacherous Macbeth was killed in battle, and the young king regained his rights the same year that Margaret and her family were invited to come and reside in England. He was living with his court at Dunfermline, in Fifeshire, when news was brought to him that the royal English exiles were wrecked upon his coast, and within a very few miles of his residence. With characteristic generosity, he made haste to repay the debt that he owed to St. Edward, by conducting

the refugees to Dunfermline, where he made them welcome to his best hospitality. His goodness of heart was in no long time amply overpaid, by his obtaining possession of the heart and the hand of the princess Margaret, then in the flower of her youth and beauty.

CHAPTER III.

Barbarous condition of the Scotch.—Queen Margaret's prayers, charities, and love of mortification.—She obtains justice for the poor, and redeems many English captives taken in war.—Pilgrimage to St. Andrews.

SCOTLAND at that time must be considered as having scarcely begun to emerge from a state of barbarism. We speak of it as a kingdom, because its crown was independent; but its population probably did not equal half the modern population of Glasgow. Whole districts were occupied by morasses, by swamps, and by unproductive forests. The work of Ninian, of Palladius, and of Columba, to which it owed its Christianity, was not indeed wholly destroyed; but it had suffered cruelly from the incursions of Danish and Norwegian pirates, and from the fierce passions of rival races within the country itself.

An improvement had followed the union of its northern and southern inhabitants, under Kenneth Macalpine, in the previous century; yet is impossible

to doubt that, when young Malcolm returned from exile to take possession of his inheritance, he arrived among a people who had nearly everything to learn of the humanising arts of peace. War, and the chase, and a rude kind of husbandry were too probably the extent of their attainments. Many of the older monasteries had perished by foreign invasion ; the voice of religion could only make itself feebly heard amidst the bloody feuds of the clans, and the more terrible assaults of their English neighbours. Indeed, it is hardly a matter of doubt whether Malcolm himself was much superior in cultivation to the rude serfs and barons who looked up to him as their sovereign. The arrival of the princess Margaret with her retinue, and his choice of her for his queen, were events of the very highest importance in their results on the late history of the Scottish nation. Its civilisation may be assumed to date from the occurrence of those fortunate events. If polished manners were anywhere to be found at that day, Margaret must have acquired them at the court of Stephen, and her mother could not fail to have been familiar with them at the court of the emperor. Several of the Hungarian and of the Norman nobility also became domesticated in Scotland, in the retinue of the princess Margaret and of her mother ; and it is probable that their cultivation must have been a little in advance of the native Scotch.

But the civilisation which took its rise in Scotland

in the reign of Queen Margaret was eminently of a Christian kind. It differed essentially from the artificial refinement of pagan nations in this, that religion was acknowledged as its foundation. The queen herself was a model of every virtue. Her first care was to purify her own conscience, and secure the Divine blessing on her plans for the improvement of her people, by living a holy life. She made choice of a prudent counsellor in matters relating to her soul, in a Benedictine monk of the name of Turgot, who was afterwards prior of Durham, and finally bishop of St. Andrews. With him she concerted her plans for making her high position advantageous to the people of Scotland. It was he who directed her in the exercises of piety and devotion in which she spent a great portion of her time. There are numbers of good people in the world, who have no conception of the pleasure it gives holy persons to pass a long time in prayer, and in the praises of God. Hence it is a common mistake to suppose that this shew of devotion is made for a purpose, or that historians and panegyrists have made much more of it than is at all consistent with the truth. But it generally happens that some proof of the reality of a saint's devotion is furnished by other and more active parts of his life. In the case of St. Margaret, although her daily prayers were long, her works of charity and of self-denial were arduous; and such works are accomplished only by hands that are every day stretched to

heaven, for strength greater than belongs to our feeble nature. Prayer was so sweet to her, that she grudged spending all the night in sleep. She often rose ere it was day, to unite her praise with the worship of those heavenly choirs where there is no night. The Psalter was an especial favourite with her; she recited the whole of it, with many tears, every day. There are few days, indeed, in the life of any one, in which the changing moods of the human spirit are not reflected in the language of these inspired poems. St. Margaret never omitted being present, every morning, at the holy sacrifice of the mass. She generally found time to hear several masses, before engaging in the business of the day. Although books were a rare and expensive luxury in those days, the queen contrived to procure a few of them for her spiritual reading. We are told, in particular, of a beautiful copy of the Gospels, which she valued very highly, and carried with her wherever she went. It was ornamented with gold and colours, and the capital letters were exquisitely illuminated. The king, her husband, was unable to read; but she inspired him with so much interest in all her pursuits, that he often looked into her prayer-books, and the rest of her little library; the rough man would even kiss a book of which he perceived the queen to be very fond; and sometimes he would give an order to have it bound handsomely for her use. As a consequence of the queen's love of pious reading, she enjoyed conversing

on religious subjects with some of her clergy, proposing questions for their solution, and often astonishing them with the depth and originality of her own thoughts.

To this extraordinary love of prayer and of pious reading, she united a penitential tone of mind, which prompted her to afflict her body with fasting, even beyond the rule imposed by the Church. For example, she prepared for the festival of our Lord's Nativity by a fast of forty days, just as the Church prepares for the festival of his Resurrection by the fast of Lent. The constant feebleness of her health might very well have excused her from duties of this kind, even from such as were of obligation; but her resolute will carried her through the performance of more than was required. Her repasts, too, were strictly in accordance with the same spirit of penitence. They were poor and spare, and barely sufficient to sustain nature, without gratifying her appetite.

Unhappily, the experience of daily life goes to shew that the practice of the severer virtues, such as these, does not necessarily promote among ordinary Christians the growth of the gentler and more amiable features of character. Human nature is so imperfect, among good people even, that we find every day censorious habits, suspicious tempers, irritable feelings, combined with a rigid performance of the severest duties of religion. But St. Margaret, like all the saints, kept her heart soft and tender by acts of mercy to the poor members

of Jesus Christ. To wait on poor persons at table, to wash their feet, and to send them away with a liberal alms, was a part of her daily occupation. During Lent and Advent, their numbers were very considerably increased. Her charity especially overflowed towards widows and poor orphan children; and she provided places where the indigent sick might be taken care of, and where she waited on them in person, as if in them she saw her Divine Lord and Master visibly represented. The expense incurred by all this daily outlay sometimes exceeded the means at her command; when that happened, she thought nothing of selling her own jewels and ornaments, and, with the king's permission, she now and then drew on the public treasury for sums of money which drained it of every farthing.

In that rude age, it was often impossible for the poor to obtain justice in their disputes between man and man. Their hardships in this respect did not escape the attention of the tender-hearted queen. She made herself the channel of appeal for them to the royal ear; she sat in public places to hear their grievances and inform herself about the merits of their cause. In a field about a mile from Dunfermline, on the road to Queensferry, the county maps of last century used to shew the position of a stone called St. Margaret's stone, on which she was alleged by a constant tradition to have sat, while she held those rude courts of appeal. The poorest could always obtain readier access to her

there, than in the interior of her palace. The stone itself was still to be seen, sixty years ago, and probably more recently still. We do not know whether it may not remain to this day.

Another form of mercy, to which the charity of the queen disposed her, belonged especially to the circumstances of that age. Wars between the English and the Scottish nations were very frequent. The hospitable welcome given by Malcolm to the refugees from the English court, provoked the hostility of the Conqueror, and brought an army across the border of the kingdoms. From time to time, hostilities were renewed with varying success on either side; and, as a consequence of this disturbed state of the country, Scotland contained many English prisoners of war, who became virtually the slaves of their captors. The queen employed commissioners to travel over the country, and observe which of those unhappy captives were subjected to the severest treatment. When her commissioners had made their report, she sent them down again with money, to purchase the freedom of her suffering countrymen.

St. Andrew's was then a place of great resort for pilgrims; and many of them were poor people, who suffered great hardships, both in their passage across the Frith of Forth and when they reached the shore, either in going or in returning. The queen, in consequence, erected houses for their reception on the

shores of the Frith, where they were provided, at her expense, with everything that they required. She also maintained a service of ferry-boats, for the gratuitous transport of poor pilgrims to the shrine of the apostle, and back again to their own homes.

CHAPTER IV.

Queen Margaret's munificence to churches.—Her influence over her husband.—She encourages ceremony at court.—She reforms public manners.—She promotes industry and commerce.

MUNIFICENCE to the house of God is very nearly allied to the charity which cares for the living temples of his body. Apart, altogether, from the pious desire to lodge him, in his sacramental presence, in a manner not at least inferior to the palaces in which earthly sovereignty resides—a desire symbolised by the lavish act of Mary, when she anointed Jesus for his burial, and which the censorious traitor interpreted as a waste of precious materials—the poor are not robbed of the wealth which builds and adorns the temples of God. The poor, in the short intervals of their rest from toil, love to exchange their close and squalid abodes for the free air and the liberty of spacious churches; the poor feel the exchange more agreeable than the rich, who return to homes more luxuriously furnished than the church.

The poor also feel as if they had a kind of property in their churches; they seem almost to belong to them. The church is at least common ground, above the ordinary level of the world, on which they can meet their richer neighbours with something of an equality. All that a noble church expresses, all that is done there and foreshadowed there, is common to rich and poor; and the poor feel that, and in their hearts bless the founders of noble churches, as among their truest benefactors.

Such was doubtless the double motive of this holy queen, in her large contributions to the beauty of God's house. On the site of the humbler temple at Dunfermline, where she had been married and crowned, she erected a fine church, in honour of the blessed Trinity. The best decorations that the age afforded were bestowed upon it; the vessels used in the service of the altar were of solid gold. Mention is made, also, of a cross of exquisite workmanship, and profusely ornamented with jewels and the precious metals, with an image of our crucified Lord attached to it, which excited the devotion of every one who entered the queen's new church at Dunfermline. We must not confound with this crucifix another cross to which Queen Margaret had much devotion, and which, as we shall see by and by, she carried about with her on her journeys. This was long afterwards known as the Black Cross of Scotland; it was to lodge it worthily

that King David, the youngest son of Queen Margaret, built and endowed the abbey of Holy Rood, or Holy Cross, at Edinburgh.

The queen was also a great benefactor to the church of St. Andrew's, afterwards the metropolitan see of Scotland. There, too, she erected a cross which was long regarded with peculiar veneration. Her chamber was always filled with materials for church decoration and for the divine service; with censers, and copes, with chasubles, and stoles, and altar-cloths, and priests' vestments. Some of these were in the process of manufacture, others of them, when finished, were kept there for a while, to be looked at and admired; in short, the queen's workroom resembled the warehouse of a dealer in church ornaments.

St. Margaret also erected a small chapel near Roslin, three miles to the south of Edinburgh, in honour of St. Catherine of Egypt, whose body is related to have been buried on Mount Sinai. The ruins of this chapel, which were still visible late in the last century, gave their name to the neighbouring mansion-house, which is still called St. Catherine's.

Before Queen Margaret could effect so much for the honour of religion, it is clear that she must have gained very considerable influence over her husband. Although at first rude and illiterate, he was very tractable, and easily came into the views of his amiable queen. Her first success seems to have been in persuading him to

reform his life. The duties of justice, of purity, of charity, and of mercy, are precisely those in which a man raised only a few degrees above a savage would be most wanting ; and in those duties he had before his eyes a daily model in Queen Margaret. She managed him so prudently as not to make her religion offensive to him, as too often happens from the indiscretion of pious people. Before Queen Margaret had done with her apt scholar, she had taught him both how to keep his conscience free from great sin, and also how to imitate her exercise of the works of mercy. She had taught him the value of prayer; so much so, that he was often induced to join his holy queen in the exercise of public devotion, for which she stole time from the hours of the night.

Margaret brought to her great task of civilising Scotland and its sovereign a larger worldly experience than his, which she had gained during long and familiar residence at courts considerably further advanced in civilisation. Knowing the value of a certain ceremoniousness in preserving the subordination of one rank to another, without which society falls into serious disorder, Margaret introduced greater state into her husband's court; she persuaded him to command the attendance of a guard of honour, when he appeared in public. State ceremonies were conducted with more decorum ; when the king entertained his nobles, greater attention was paid to external propriety, both in dress

and in behaviour; and the sovereign and his guests were, for the first time, served in gold and silver. The whole tenour of the holy queen's life will plead for her, against any suspicion of ostentation in these new arrangements; they were designed with excellent tact, for the purpose of teaching her rude people, in a way which they could easily comprehend, the natural distinctions of rank, and the reciprocal duties of one order in society to another.

Her reforms at court went deeper than this. She chose only women of noble birth, and of unimpeachable character, for her attendants; she permitted no levity of manners among the young courtiers, in her presence. Her own manners were marked by a union of sweetness with reserve, which both attracted every one who approached her, and at the same time checked familiarity. Even when she was gayest, she never indulged in empty laughter; and when she was compelled to find fault, she never failed in dignity, even in the most provoking circumstances. Her influence, as may be imagined from this description, which we owe to one who knew her well, was very great. It repressed the licence of a half-civilised court, and maintained a high tone of propriety, probably new to her courtiers.

From the reign of this illustrious lady may be dated the earliest efforts of Scotland in commercial industry. She encouraged merchants to import, both by sea and from England, many and various kinds of goods, such

as Scotland had never before known, more particularly in wearing-apparel of an ornamental kind ; and this no doubt with a view to elevating the taste and the tone of her people ; for, excepting the savage pomp of war, they were strangers to anything better than the squalid habits of their barbarian homes. We shall not attempt to decide the question, whether the invention of the Scottish tartan owes its origin to these efforts of Queen Margaret. Historians have said so ; and the thing is very possible.

CHAPTER V.

The Queen's family.—Their later history.—The queen persuades the bishops to reform some abuses in religion.—She addresses them in council.—The Grace-Drink.

THE family of Queen Margaret consisted of six sons and two daughters. Their education naturally occupied much of the thoughts of their holy mother. Her active endeavours to train them up piously and usefully were sanctified by many secret prayers for success, and by many tears. Little or nothing of her method has come down to us, but this one significant fact, that, as in her lessons to her whole kingdom, the queen made subordination a constant rule in her family ; she not only claimed deference and obedience from her children, for herself and for their father, but, in addi-

tion to this, she insisted on the younger giving precedence, on every occasion, to the elder. Thus, for example, when they went up to make their offering at mass, according to the custom of that day, she bade them go in the order of their ages, first the elder, and then the younger.

A very brief sketch of the later history of St. Margaret's children, will very well compensate for the scantiness of our knowledge as to her method of training them. Edward, the eldest son, was killed prematurely in battle; but not before he had lived long enough to win the affection and esteem of the whole nation. His death was regarded as the too early extinction of the brightest promise.

Ethelred, his next brother, died also in his youth. He had become a monk, died abbot of Dunkeld, and is mentioned in a monastic record as a man of venerable memory. His body is supposed to have been accidentally discovered in the church of Dunfermline, four centuries later, wrapped in silk, and in good preservation.

Regarding Edmund, the queen's third son, history varies considerably. According to one version of his story, he lived and died in a pious manner, in England, as a recluse; according to another, he failed in his duty for a time, but in the end expiated his fault by sincere repentance. In either case, the lessons of his mother were not lost upon him. Their influence would

appear stronger, if we adopt the supposition of his becoming a great penitent.

His fourth brother, Edgar, after an interval of a few years of anarchy in the kingdom, succeeded his father, Malcolm, and reigned happily nine years. His highest praise must be that, in his mild government, his equity, and his beneficence, nay, in the sweetness of his disposition, he reminded all men of Edward the Confessor. Alexander, his next brother, became King of Scotland at his death, and maintained the family character for justice, charity, and religion. He made munificent gifts to the Church. Among other benefactions, he founded a monastery on the Island of Inchcolme, in the Frith of Forth, out of gratitude for his preservation in a violent tempest, which had driven him on the little island, and had kept him there for three days, as the guest of a lonely hermit.

On his death, after a reign of seventeen years, David, the sixth and youngest son of the queen, began his long and prosperous reign of nearly thirty years. Circumstances enabled him, more perfectly than his brothers, to carry on the humanising and civilising policy of his mother: in her son David, the holy queen may be said still to have presided over the destinies of Scotland. The churchmen, and especially the monastic orders of that day, were much in advance of the rough fighting-men and the still rougher peasantry, in the arts of civilisation. David, therefore, by the munificent

encouragement which he gave to churchmen, largely promoted the objects so near his mother's heart in regard to Scotland. He died as he had lived, in a holy manner, and long enjoyed the local reputation of a saint, though he was never canonised by the Holy See.

Matilda, or Maude, the elder of St. Margaret's daughters, reflected her mother's virtues at the court of Henry I. of England, to whom she was married. Her love to the poor, and her devotion to the sick, resembled her mother's; she founded the hospitals of Christchurch in Aldgate, and of St. Giles', for their relief. Her subjects surnamed her The Good; and local English calendars mentioned her, too, as a saint. Her dust lies in Westminster Abbey, not far from St. Edward's. Her only daughter, Maude, was married first to the Emperor Henry V., and afterwards to Geoffrey, Count of Anjou; and by her second marriage she became the mother of Henry II. of England. Through her, our present gracious Queen, and many private English families, are lineally descended from St. Margaret.

The second daughter of the holy Queen of Scotland was named Mary, and became the wife of Eustace, Count of Boulogne, brother of the famous Godfrey, King of Jerusalem. She, too, left behind her a name for great piety and charity. If the proverb be true, that the end puts a crown on the work, Queen Margaret's education of her children was abundantly crowned in its successful issue.

An undertaking, more arduous than all of these, still lay before our holy queen, before she could say that she had finished the task assigned to her. That was nothing less than a reformation of abuses in religion. If we consider the lawlessness of the times, and the demoralising effect of the frequent wars that wasted the country, it will not appear surprising that something had to be corrected in religious observances. The general neglect of Sundays, and of the great festivals, seems to have been one of the most crying evils; as was also the frequent disuse even of the Easter Communion. Marriage with a step-mother and with a brother's widow had become not uncommon. Among lesser evils, the irregular time of commencing Lent appeared to St. Margaret a matter which called for reform; instead of commencing from Ash-Wednesday, or even earlier, as was the practice formerly in certain places, it had become the custom in Scotland to defer the beginning of the fast till after the first Sunday in Lent. To these and other matters of discipline, our holy queen could not be altogether indifferent. It is true, indeed, that she could not be regarded as responsible for them; but it seemed to her at least worth an effort to bring her own influence and her husband's to bear upon the persons whose peculiar province it was to correct such abuses. With this view she promoted the meeting of provincial councils of the clergy on several occasions. One of those was more than ordinarily remarkable, for the active part which Margaret

herself took in its deliberations. The Gaelic language was then the dialect of Scotland, but Margaret was ignorant of it; the king, therefore, who thoroughly understood both his own language and the Anglo-Saxon, which Margaret spoke, undertook to be the interpreter between the bishops and the queen. Margaret made a short speech to the assembled clergy, setting forth the abuses which called for amendment, with so much persuasiveness, as to engage her august audience at once to promote the reforms which she had so deeply at heart. The council, indeed, was not a large one; the number of sees in Scotland then amounted to no more than four; and it was part of the queen's scheme for the advancement of religion, to add two more sees for the northern part of her kingdom.

The neglect of saying grace at meals suggested to the holy queen a popular way of encouraging this act of natural piety. She introduced the custom, at the end of meals, of drinking to the health of those persons who had thanked God for his temporal mercies. This custom long survived her, under the name of the Grace-Drink, or St. Margaret's blessing.

CHAPTER VI.

Queen Margaret feels a presentiment of her death.—Malcolm goes to war with England, and perishes.—The Queen expires in Edinburgh Castle, and is buried at Dunfermline.

FOR nearly a quarter of a century Scotland had enjoyed the benefit of Queen Margaret's example. It was a period of some prosperity for the country, occasionally dashed by reverses in war with the overwhelming force of England. Yet when compared with the sorrowful youth of the queen, passed in a foreign land, and in a state of dependence on the goodwill of others, Margaret's married life may be accounted on the whole a fortunate time for her, in a worldly sense. But the scene once more changes, and the close of this holy lady's residence on earth is surrounded, like her youth, with gloom and storm. Her biographer has left us an affecting history of a conversation which she had with him, some time before the end, and in which she spoke openly to him of her presentiment of an early death. It was on an occasion when he was about to leave her to return to his monastery. She talked to him of all that had befallen her in life; and as she spoke, her tears flowed freely. It was impossible to take part in such an interview, without being moved to tears. They both of them wept; and for a time, neither spoke.

Then the queen resumed, bidding her spiritual adviser farewell,—“I shall not be long in this world,” she said, “and you will survive me many years. Two requests I have to make; I beg you never to forget my soul in your masses and your prayers; and that you will love and care for my children, and will teach them to fear and to love God. If hereafter you should observe any of them too much elated with their high position, you will advise them, and, if necessary, reprove them, as a father and a teacher, dissuading them from offending their God by a love of money, and from the neglect of eternal happiness for the sake of earthly prosperity. These things I beg you will promise me to do, as in the presence of God, who is listening, as a third person, to our conversation.” The good monk gave her his promise, through his tears; and they parted for ever in this world.

The son of the conqueror now reigned in England; and Malcolm took advantage of what seemed a favourable moment to renew the war on the border. A short interval of peace ensued; but a presumed invasion of Scottish rights in Cumberland again brought Malcolm into the field, in opposition to the express wish of St. Margaret, who, it seems, had a foresight of coming disasters. The queen, meanwhile, removed for security to the Castle of Edinburgh, a fortified stronghold, owing its origin to Edwin, the consort of St. Paulinus. A severe attack of illness left behind it a chronic

weakness, from which she never rallied. At first she was compelled to forego her favourite exercise of riding on horseback; later, she could seldom leave her bed. This state of langour continued for rather more than six months.

Four days before she breathed her last, she appeared sadder than usual, and remarked to her attendants that perhaps that day a greater calamity had befallen Scotland, than at any former period. They paid no particular attention to what she said, until, a day or two later, news arrived that the king had perished; then they remembered, too, how she had laboured to dissuade her husband from this fatal expedition.

On the fourth day after she had made this remark, she revived a little, and was able to attend mass in her oratory, where she received for the last time the most sacred body of our Lord. Scarcely was the service over, when she became much worse, and was put to bed. It was evident that her end was very near. Her face was deadly pale, and while the ministers of religion stood around, she entreated them to commend her soul to Christ. She sent for the black Cross, which she had always especially venerated; it was placed in her hands; and she kept looking at it, kissing it, and signing her face with it. Her hands and feet had become quite cold; still she prayed audibly, repeating the psalm *Miserere*, from beginning to end, holding the cross in both her hands.

At this critical moment, her son Edgar arrived from the seat of war, with the first intelligence of disaster. Entering his mother's chamber, he found a scene even more heartrending than he had left behind him. The queen, who seemed as if every moment might be her last, suddenly collected her strength, and asked her son for his father and his brother Edward. He feared to tell her the whole dreadful truth, and tried to evade her inquiries by answering that they were well. With a deep sigh she replied, "I know it all, my son ; I know it all. I adjure you by this holy cross, by our near relationship, to tell me the whole truth." It was impossible for him to resist such an appeal ; the young prince informed his mother that his father and his brother Edward had fallen in the neighbourhood of Alnwick, four days ago, and had been carried to Tynemouth, for interment.

The dying queen's reply was a memorable one. Raising her eyes and her hands to heaven, she exclaimed, "I return thee praise and thanks, O Almighty God, for inflicting on me so grievous a calamity in my last moments ; it is the effect of thy will to purify me, by bearing it, from some sinful imperfections."

Death was now rapidly advancing. The thoughts of the saint reverted to the sacred mysteries of religion, with which the habits of her life-time had made her familiar. Her last thoughts were expressed in the words of the prayer in the liturgy, immediately before

the communion. “O Lord Jesus Christ, who by the will of thy Father, and the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, hast given life to the world by thy death, deliver me”—her prayer was not finished on earth; with the words, *Deliver me*, on her lips, the weary pilgrim passed to her everlasting communion with the Author and the Finisher of her faith. Her spirit returned to God, so peacefully and so serenely, as to leave no doubt in the minds of her attendants that she had exchanged labour for rest, her exile on earth for her heavenly home. The excessive paleness of her countenance was succeeded by a rosy flush, such as those who loved her had sometimes seen there, while she was asleep; and even now they could hardly think that she was dead. The day was the 16th of November, 1093; and the number of her years was only forty-six.

A few days after the queen's holy departure, her precious body was carried to Dunfermline, amidst the tears and lamentations of her family and of the whole nation, and was interred near the altar of the Holy Cross, in the Abbey church which she had founded. “And there,” to use the language in which her biographer, with much pathos, concludes her beautiful story, “there she rested, in the place which had so long witnessed her painful watchings, her prayers and her tears.”

CHAPTER VII.

Beginning of devotion to Queen Margaret as a Saint.—Her Canonisation.—And Translation.—Her tomb a place of Pilgrimage.—Cross Hill.—What became of her body, after the Reformation.—Her head preserved, and sent to the Low Countries.—Her office inserted in the Roman breviary.—Changes in the day set apart for her festival.

OUR account of this holy queen's life would be manifestly incomplete, without at least a short sketch of the rise and progress of the veneration in which her memory is now held, not only in Scotland, but wherever the Catholic faith is professed. We shall do our best to make it as brief and as exact as possible, premising, however, that the inquiry is beset with unusual difficulties as regards the dates of particular events. This is the first occasion on which a tolerably correct account of the subject has been gathered into one popular view.

As long as we find that the soul of the holy queen was publicly prayed for, we may presume that the opinion of her sanctity had not yet gained ground sufficiently to warrant her being regarded as a saint, in the strictest sense of the word. Now, five years after her death, we find her son Edgar founding an

Abbey at Coldingham "for the souls of his father, and of his mother," and of others. Fifteen years later than that, her son David founded another abbey, also for the souls of his father and mother. Hence, whatever private and even growing opinion there may have been about her sanctity, nothing had been determined, up to the date of 1113, that could authorise the omission of her name from such pious commemorations.

About thirty years after her death, however, we discover the first trace of the rising feeling towards St. Margaret, as a glorified Saint, in a grant of land to Coldingham, by a nobleman who made it "for the soul of King Malcolm, and his deceased sons." From that time, that is, a year or two after the accession of her son David to the throne, and onwards through succeeding reigns, we have tacit proofs of the same kind, to show that public opinion pointed to the lamented queen as to a holy soul for whom it were henceforth superfluous to pray, and for whom the honours of canonisation were probably in store.

All through the century succeeding her death, this opinion prevailed and gathered strength; other fifty years passed, and the time was come when Rome was to be requested to set its seal on the result of public opinion. William III, a descendant of the Saint, entered warmly into the cause; the abbot of Dunfermline was deputed to promote it, before the holy See. The bishops of Scotland added their unanimous tes-

timony, and the earnest prayers of both clergy and people expressed the universal desire to see their blessed queen raised to her place among the canonised. The cause was remitted to a commission of the bishops, to take evidence, and to report upon it. Their hearty co-operation made this part of the process a short and an easy one; and Innocent IV., in no long time, pronounced the decree of the queen's canonisation.

All eyes were now turned from Rome to the stone tomb in the abbey church of Dunfermline, where the holy remains had lain for a hundred and fifty-eight years. The king was there, and his mother the dowager queen Joan, sister of the English Henry III.; the bishops and abbots of the kingdom were in attendance, together with the great nobility, and a numerous deputation of the clergy and of the laity. The whole of the summer night, before the great day of Translation, was spent by the assembled multitude in prayer for the Divine blessing on the event of the next day. The 19th of June, 1251, dawned on Scotland, and an august procession passed into the abbey church. Bishops, and clergy, and mitred abbots were preceded by the Cross, and the waving censer, and were followed by the king and his court, and by a joyful multitude; bells without, and organs within the church accompanied the chanting of psalms and hymns, as the holy rite proceeded, and the bishops approached the tomb of the royal saint. It was opened, and her holy body was placed

with great ceremony in a chest of silver, ornamented with gold and with precious stones. The church resounded with the invocation which has never since that day altogether ceased in Scotland,—*Saint Margaret pray for us.* It was the first public canonisation that Scotland had for many previous centuries witnessed—and, strange to say, it was the last.

The honoured tomb of the saint now became an object of frequent pilgrimage. As devout persons approached Dunfermline from the south, they reached a rising ground about a mile from the ferry which they had to cross, whence they gained their first view of the abbey church, the goal of their journey. It became a custom among them to pause here for a few minutes' prayer; a cross was erected on the spot, and gave the little knoll the name of Cross Hill, which it has retained even till our time. The steps of the cross might have been seen a very few years ago; perhaps they are still visible.

From the day of her Translation, previously to the era of the Reformation, two days were set apart every year to the memory of St. Margaret; one, the day of her decease, November 16th, and the other, at an early period, June 19th, the day of her translation. This second day, however, was changed to June 10th; at what time, or for what reason, historians are at a loss to say. One competent authority, indeed, suggests that it may have been in consequence of a second trans-

lation of the saint's head, which we know was at one time separated from her body, as was done with the relics of many saints.

When the storm of the Reformation swept away so much of what the "ancient Christianity" had taught men to revere, the body of St. Margaret disappeared from the church at Dunfermline, and the church itself became a ruin. From this time, we must regard the relic of the saint's head as entirely separated from her body. On the unsupported authority of the Scotch historian, Conn, it has been alleged that the holy body of the queen, together with the body of her husband, was removed, at the request of Philip II. of Spain, to the royal chapel in his new palace of the Escurial, near Madrid. It is added that they were enclosed in the same chest, with suitable paintings, and an inscription containing their names. It is sufficient to say that the late bishop Geddes, who spent ten years of his life in Spain, and was on terms of intimacy with many of the Spanish court, could never find any evidence of this translation of the royal bodies.

The head of St. Margaret we are able to trace with more certainty. It was removed from Dunfermline, in the first instance, to the Castle of Edinburgh, where the unfortunate Queen Mary thought herself happy to possess it. At the period of her flight into England, the sacred head was concealed in the Castle of Dury, by a Benedictine monk of that family. After thirty

years it passed into the possession of the Scotch fathers of the Society of Jesus, who deputed one of their number, F. Robb, to carry it over to Antwerp for greater safety. Its public veneration was sanctioned by the bishop in 1620. Three years afterwards, it was removed from Antwerp to the Scotch College at Douay, at that time under the charge of the Scotch Jesuits. The bishop of Arras, in the same year, publicly authorised its being treated as a true relic of the saint.*

Meanwhile the Scottish refugees at Rome were not idle in promoting the honour of St. Margaret, especially among their Catholic countrymen. Innocent X. (1645), first granted a plenary indulgence to the faithful on

* The relic of St. Margaret's head at Douay has a singular history attached to it. A Scotch Lady, of the name of Mowbray, presented the College with a rich silver bust, larger than life, and profusely ornamented with jewels, as a reliquary to contain the head of the saint. During the Commonwealth in England, the sons of Charles I. in their exile visited Douay, and asked to be shewn the relic of their illustrious ancestress.

Nearly a century later, when the jesuits were driven from France (1765), the reliquary disappeared from the Scotch College at Douay, and has never since been traced. The sacred relic, however, was not removed. It still adorned the College under the government of Scotch secular priests, until the great revolution laid the religion of France in ruins, (1793). The superiors, before their hurried departure from Douay, buried the head in their garden, hoping at some future day to return and claim it. But when the College was again visited by the Scotch, no trace of their valued relic could be found.

St. Margaret's day, which was then kept on the 10th of June. The office and mass of St. Margaret had been confined, up to this time, to the limits of her own kingdom. In 1673, her office was inserted by Clement X. in the Roman Breviary, June 10th, as a semi-double festival, with the option to all clergymen not Scotchmen to say the ferial office on the day, if they preferred it. The saint was at the same time declared to be Patroness of Scotland, second in order to St. Andrew the Apostle; and her festival was appointed to be kept in Scotland as a double of the second class. The Pope granted this extension of the saint's office to the petition of F. Aloysius Leslie, the Jesuit rector of the Scotch College in Rome, in conjunction with the agent of the Scotch Missionaries, and with the Baron Menzies of Pitfodels, who at that time represented the Duke of Muscovy at the court of Rome.

Soon afterwards, and probably with a view to making the virtues of the holy queen better and more generally known, F. Leslie published a short history of her life, in the Italian language.

The experience of a few years was sufficient to shew that some inconvenience attached to the celebration of St. Margaret's day on the 10th of June, owing to the frequent concurrence of some of the later movable festivals on the same day. Innocent XI. therefore transferred it to the 8th of July, (1678).

Another, and a final change in the day was made by

Innocent XII. (1693), at the instance of the unhappy James II. of England and his consort, who petitioned his Holiness to restore the saint's day to the 10th of June, the birthday of their no less unfortunate son, afterwards called by his adherents James III. of England. The pope at the same time renewed a decree of 1691, which had made the festival of St. Margaret no longer optional to the whole Church, but as henceforth of precept. Thus the final crown was placed on the devotion which for nearly six centuries had been gradually gathering round the Scottish queen.

CHAPTER VIII.

Memorials of St. Margaret in Scotland.—Her chapel in Edinburgh Castle.—Her well.—Queensferry.—Her altar in Rome.—Conclusion.

It still remains to describe, in few words, some of the principal memorials of this admirable lady, still lingering in the country which she once adorned by her virtues.

The picturesque old city of Edinburgh possesses nothing more deeply interesting than the Chapel of St. Margaret, in the Castle. Even if its style does not altogether warrant the opinion entertained by some persons, that it is the very same oratory as that in which St. Margaret made her last communion, the morning

of her death, it was certainly erected within a short time of that event, while the memory of the saint was still fresh in the country. This little treasure of architecture—for it is no less—had lain for years forgotten, until the intelligent research of Dr. Daniel Wilson, now professor at Toronto, laid open to the public as perfect an example of a Norman building as an antiquary could desire. It has been restored in very good taste; and no Catholic tourist should visit the capital of the north, without refreshing his devotion to St. Margaret by a visit to this little monument. It stands close to the spot whence her blessed spirit passed, so long ago, to the enjoyment of God.

A little to the eastward of Edinburgh there remains a holy well, still called St. Margaret's. The tradition which connects it with the saint has been lost; but it must evidently have been a place of popular resort in former times. The stone shrine in which it is enclosed is exquisitely designed and carved. It stands almost under the station of the North British Railway, called, from the well, St. Margaret's station.

The great north road, which, before the invention of the railway, connected the capital of Scotland with Perth and the Highlands, conducts the traveller to the margin of the Frith of Forth, nine miles from Edinburgh. A little town lies here, called Queensferry, from the circumstance of St. Margaret's constantly crossing the ferry at this place, on her journeys be-

tween Edinburgh and Dunfermline. On a modern cast-iron well, which supplies the public with water, the tourist may see the coat of arms belonging to the queen's family, and generally known as the arms of St. Edward.*

As the Catholic tourist has come so far, he may now cross the ferry, as St. Margaret used to do, and a drive of a very few miles further will bring him to Dunfermline, where she was married, where she worked out the task of her life, and where her remains rested in honour for nearly six hundred years. The abbey, as enlarged by her son David, is a noble ruin. The nave of the church stands, and the roofless frater-hall, or refectory of the monks. A visit to this place will suggest many reflections to any one who has learnt to know and value the memory of our blessed queen.

Her name is found attached to other places, all over the country: to a well in Lanarkshire, for example; to a bay on the coast of Fife-shire, and to a village in the Orkney Islands, called St. Margaret's Hope.

The beautiful little church of St. Andrew, belonging to the Scotch college in Rome, has three altars. The high altar is dedicated to the Apostle; the altar on the Gospel side of the church belongs to the Virgin-mother of Jesus; and opposite to it is the altar of St. Margaret.

* A cross patonce, between five martlets (birds deprived of their claws and beaks).

The picture above it, attributed to the pencil of a Polish artist, represents the saint in her sorrowful suspense during the last absence of her husband. She kneels in her oratory, praying and weeping; her crown is laid aside; and far away we may discern the fatal issue of the day at Alnwick.

On reviewing the life of St. Margaret, one cannot fail to be struck with one pregnant fact. Her life was nearly equally divided between inactive suffering, and arduous and repulsive labour. Exile, comparative poverty, and vicissitude, occupied the first half of her life; the task of civilising a race of barbarians provided her with ample occupation of no easy kind, during the second. All was finished in her forty-seventh year. Whether in her earlier noviciate of humiliation, or in her maturer task, as Queen of Scotland, by redeeming the time, she made haste to enter into eternal rest. While we admire, let us learn to imitate. Let our tribute to her memory be the fruitful desire of an affection prompting us to follow the object of its regard.

NOTE.

THE author feels it to be due to his readers, not to take leave of them until he has very briefly indicated the sources of his information about St. Margaret; more especially as, in a work of this popular kind, foot-notes are out of place. In the first place, he has largely drawn upon the *Life*, written by Theodoric, the queen's confessor, afterwards a monk at Durham. Much of what this writer relates, he saw with his own eyes; the rest he obtained from other eye-witnesses. His story will be found in the *Bollandist Lives* (June 10). Besides this, the author acknowledges his obligation to a scarce tract, written by the late incomparable bishop Geddes, of whom this generation knows too little. Lastly, the author feels bound in justice to record, even in this inadequate manner, his debt to a learned Scottish priest who has devoted the unrequited labour of many years to St. Margaret's life, and who, it is sincerely to be wished, may be sufficiently encouraged ere long to give his learned collection to the world. For a full account of St. Margaret's Well, at Edinburgh, and of the recent disinterment of her chapel in the Castle, the reader is referred to Dr. D. Wilson's *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*.

THE
Life of Saint Elisabeth,
QUEEN OF PORTUGAL.

"NOW THY BROWS ARE COLD,
I SEE THEE WHAT THOU ART, AND KNOW
THY LIKENESS TO THE WISE BELOW,
THY KINDRED WITH THE GREAT OF OLD."

Contents.

CHAP. I.

Parentage of Elisabeth.—She is born.—Receives the name of St. Elisabeth, her great-aunt.—She is affianced to the king of Portugal, and travels by land to her new kingdom	5
---	---

CHAP. II.

The young queen's daily life.—Birth of a daughter, and of a son and heir.—Frequent wars.—Elisabeth is a peacemaker.—Conference of kings at Turiaso.—Death of her daughter Constantia.—Story of the hermit.—War between the king of Portugal and his son the Infante.—Elisabeth is deprived of her income.—She makes peace several times between her husband and her son	10
---	----

CHAP. III.

The queen's religious observances.—Her love of fasting.—Her charities.—Her industrial school at Santarem	17
--	----

CHAP. IV.

PAGE

The king dies.—The queen goes to Santiago.—Builds a convent at Coimbra, and resides near it.—Her daily life.—She goes to Estremoz, to make peace, and dies.—Her tomb.—Her canonisation.—Miracle of the Roses.—Tale of Fridolin	21
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THE LIFE OF ST. ELISABETH, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL.

CHAPTER I.

Parentage of Elisabeth.—She is born.—Receives the name of St. Elisabeth, her great-aunt.—She is affianced to the king of Portugal, and travels by land to her own kingdom.

WHEN a son of St. Elisabeth of Hungary arrived, one day, as a page in the retinue of a certain prince, at the court of Queen Blanche, and of her son St. Louis, neither the king nor the queen, as we are told, could shew honour enough to the “dear St. Elisabeth,” as she was represented by her youthful son. The queen called him to her, took him by the hand, kissed his brow, made him sit beside her, and spoke to him of his mother.

On the present occasion, not a son, indeed, but a grand-niece of the saint of Marburg claims our regard; and all the more powerfully, on account of the rarity with which either sanctity, or extraordinary intelligence is perpetuated in the blood. Forty years had passed since the holy princess of Thuringia had been taken early to her rest, when another Elisabeth

was born, to revive the name and the memory of her who had fallen asleep at Marburg. Andrew, king of Hungary, the father of the elder St. Elisabeth, had a younger daughter, Violanta, by his second marriage, who became the wife of James, king of Aragon, called The Conqueror. Their reign was a fortunate one; the king doubled his possessions by the acquisition of Valentie and the Balearic Islands; he also acquired Murcia, as the price of his assisting King Alphonso of Castile against the Moors. His son, Peter, the Infante of Aragon, married Constantia of Sicily, a grand-daughter of the Emperor Frederic II.; and their youngest child was the second St. Elisabeth, the subject of this memoir.

Her birth occurred in 1271, during the life of her grandfather. Her only sister had already received the name of her grandmother, Violanta; the saint of Hungary had been canonised about forty years before; the parents of our little princess, therefore, thought that they could not do better than keep the name of Elisabeth in the family; so it was given to their little darling, at the font, no doubt with the expectation that her great-aunt would not be forgetful of her, in heaven.

At the time of her birth, her grandfather King James and her father the Infante Peter were not on speaking terms. It seems, however, that the old king took a great fancy to his little grand-daughter, and

predicted that she would surpass all the ladies of the house of Aragon. At the same time he made up his quarrel with his son Peter; and, five years later, finished his long reign, leaving the father of our little princess king of Aragon. She was old enough to remember, in later years, seeing two kings and three queens following her grandfather's remains to their place of sepulture at Poblete.

When the young Elisabeth was nine years of age, Alphonso, king of Portugal, dying, was succeeded by his son Dionysius. One of the earliest acts of his reign was to dispatch ambassadors to the court of Aragon, to solicit the hand of the princess Elisabeth, as his affianced bride. It so happened that they found ambassadors from two other courts, arrived on the same errand. Edward I. of England wished to secure our young princess for his son; and Charles, king of Sicily, was a suitor, on behalf of his son Robert, who afterwards married Violanta, the elder sister of Elisabeth. It was with the greatest difficulty that her father could bring himself to part with his little favourite. Her sweetness of disposition was such, that he considered her very presence in his house a source of blessing to it, which he could ill spare. Even at this tender age, Elisabeth could not conceal her love of prayer and of almsgiving.

State policy and the remonstrances of his counsellors at length compelled her father to make an election for

her, among her suitors. He determined that a king actually reigning was a more eligible match for his daughter than the heir-apparent to a throne; perhaps, too, the fact that Portugal was the nearest of the three kingdoms, may have helped him in his decision, as it promised him a better chance of sometimes seeing his beloved child. It seems, also, that she was related to both the English and the Sicilian princes, within the forbidden degrees, and her father declined the expense of procuring a dispensation from Rome. The matter was therefore decided in favour of Dionysius, king of Portugal. It was a barbarous kind of way, no doubt, of disposing of the future happiness of a mere child; but it was the custom of the age, and, indeed, of much later times, especially among persons of high rank. Nor, after all, are we quite so sure that if things were looked into very narrowly, matches, quite as summarily made, would not be found, even now, and among persons of very middling rank indeed.

The next step in the business was to send away the young queen to the court of her future husband. But now the question arose, How should she be sent? A land-journey, through a country devastated by war, appeared to the Portuguese ambassadors rather too great a risk to run; it was therefore proposed to send the bridal party by sea. On farther consideration, this was thought to be decidedly the more dangerous way of the two; so a land-journey through Valencia

and Castile, was resolved upon. The bishop of Valencia, and a company of nobles and of knights, escorted the young queen, and her train of maids of honour, and of ladies in waiting. Her trousseau was of the costliest description. What became of it, we shall see by and by.

At a certain point in the journey, the king took an affectionate leave of his favourite child. He called himself the most unfortunate of men, to be thus robbed of his dearest treasure in life. He blessed her over and over again, adding that he had imparted to her all the advice he had to give; and that in gifts of mind as well as in disposition and manners, she left him nothing to desire. And so they parted; the little queen continuing her journey, with her maids and her ladies, surrounded by a cavalcade of Aragonese and Catalonian knights. On the confines of Portugal, they were met by a brother of king Dionysius, and by another cavalcade of Portuguese nobles and knights, to whom the Aragonese consigned their treasure. At Francoso king Dionysius was waiting to receive his bride; their nuptials were celebrated, and a settled provision made for the royal maintenance of the queen. Yet it was barely eleven years since the name of St. Elisabeth had been given her at the font.

CHAPTER II.

The young queen's daily life.—Birth of a daughter, and of a son and heir.—Frequent wars.—Elisabeth is a peace-maker.—Conference of kings at Turiaso.—Death of her daughter Constantia.—Story of the hermit.—War between the king of Portugal and his son the Infante.—Elisabeth is deprived of her income.—She makes peace several times between her husband and her son.

THIS tender young creature, thus early assigned so conspicuous a position, began her new life by making such arrangements as should divide her time between her domestic duties and the service of God. Instead of the inexperience of eleven years, people seemed to see a degree of wisdom not often found even at five and twenty, or at thirty years. When she was not hearing mass, or reciting the canonical hour of prayer, she was spinning among her maidens and her ladies; or she was doing something for the poor, or trying to set people right who had fallen into trouble, or become the victims of oppression. The income which the king had settled on her found its way, in great part, into the hands of the poor, and into convents, and the houses of decayed ladies who were too high spirited to beg.

In her eighteenth year, her first child, Constantia, was born. Three years afterwards, the kingdom was

rejoiced by the birth of an heir to the throne, at Coimbra. Alphonso, the young Infante of Portugal, afterwards married Beatrix, a daughter of Sancho, king of Castile. This young princess was, like her mother-in-law, sent as a child to the Portuguese court, and educated by Elisabeth as her future daughter.

King Dionysius, although kind and indulgent to his queen, was still more indulgent to himself, and led an irregular life, to the great injury and sorrow of Elisabeth. Her greatness of soul was never more remarkably evinced than in her way of managing him. She appeared blind and deaf to all that she disapproved of in her husband, never listening to stories about him, and never reproaching him. She had calculated well in her estimate of his character. Reproaches would only have hardened him; whereas her silence affected him with remorse for his ingratitude; and her forbearance was rewarded by his abandoning the irregular practices of which she had never complained, but to God.

There were in those days rather too many small kings in the limited area of the Spanish peninsula, to permit the country long to enjoy the blessings of peace. And, failing an independent sovereign to quarrel with, any one of the four peninsular kings was ready, on the shortest notice, to go to war with his brothers, or even with his eldest son. If a king of Aragon failed to find in his next neighbour of Navarre, or of Castile, an

enemy ready to his hand, he had always his son, the Infante, to pick a quarrel with. If a king of Portugal found all of his three neighbours too pacific for his wishes, his father's sons were nearer home, and more at his mercy. The life of kings was too generally one long brawl, continued at the ruinous expense of the country and of their unhappy subjects.

One of the cases which we have mentioned actually happened, within no long time after Elisabeth's coming to Portugal. Her husband and his brother Alphonso went to war with each other, and much blood would have been wasted in the quarrel, had not Elisabeth engaged the good offices of the counsellors and prelates of the kingdom to make up matters between the brothers. And further to facilitate the business, she gave up the part of her revenue which she drew from the town of Cintra, and persuaded the king in other ways to increase the income of his brother.

Constantia, her eldest daughter, became the wife of Ferdinand IV., king of Castile (1301). The throne of Aragon was then filled by Elisabeth's brother, James. War, almost as a matter of course, was engaged in, by those two sovereigns, against each other. Its nominal cause was a dispute about the possession of certain towns and lands of which the Moors had been deprived. The art of making peace, in which Elisabeth excelled, was again put in requisition; her efforts were seconded by the imminent risk

of an attack from the Moors, while the Christian forces were destroying each other. Our gentle queen prevailed on the belligerents to meet at Turiaso, a town on the confines of Aragon and Castile, and to submit their claims to the arbitration of the king of Portugal. Elisabeth accompanied her husband to the conference (July, 1304); the queens of Castile and of Aragon also repaired to the place of meeting, attended by the flower of the nobility of both kingdoms. It was quite a family meeting for Elisabeth. She found her brother of Aragon, and she met her daughter of Castile. Her spirit of peace pervaded the proceedings of the conference; the decision of Dionysius gave satisfaction to all parties; new alliances were formed, and the assembly dispersed in perfect harmony. Elisabeth and her husband, however, prolonged their absence from home until September, returning to Portugal in time for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. It is in allusion to her repeated successes in hushing the storm of war, that Elisabeth is called in her office in the Roman Breviary the Mother of Peace, and of her country.

The next incident in her family history is the marriage of her son Alphonso with Beatrix of Castile, a sister of Ferdinand IV. The event was celebrated at Lisbon, with great rejoicing (1309). In no long time after, however, our queen had to mourn the premature decease of her daughter Constantia, queen of Castile.

A singular tale is related, in connexion with this sad event. Elisabeth and her husband happened, soon afterwards, to be travelling from Santarem to Lisbon, and on the way they stepped at Azambuja. Here the queen was met by a hermit, whom no one knew, and who cried out, In the name of God, my royal lady, I pray you to grant me an audience; for I have something important to tell you, and your attendants will not permit me to approach you. The queen having invited him to deliver his message, he went on to say that her deceased daughter Constantia had appeared to him in his cell several times, and had enjoined him to inform her mother of her detention in purgatory, and to beg that a mass might be said daily for her, for one year. The hermit had said this loud enough for the courtiers to hear. When he had finished, they began to chaff him, and to say, If Queen Constantia is in purgatory, is it a likely thing that she should appear to thee, rather than to her father or her mother? The hermit, meanwhile, disappeared; no one could give any account of him, and he was never seen again. Elisabeth, on conferring with her husband, resolved to act on the instructions she had received. She engaged a pious priest, of the name of Mendez, to say mass for her daughter, daily, for a year. At the expiry of the time fixed, Elisabeth was at Coimbra, and one night had a dream about her daughter, who appeared to her in white clothing, and

thanked her for procuring her deliverance from the penal flames of purgatory. Elisabeth had quite forgotten that the year was expired, until Mendez came, next morning, to remind her of it, and to speak about continuing to say mass. She was much comforted about her beloved daughter, and gave thanks to God.

A few more years brought back the miseries of war; and, this time, the king of Portugal found an enemy in his eldest son, the Infante Alphonso. Secret measures were taken by the king to surprise his son at Cintra, in the night-time; not even Elisabeth was made privy to the scheme. She was first alarmed by her husband's suddenly leaving her in the night, at Lisbon, and setting out, attended by troops; and at once suspecting the truth, she managed to dispatch a courier to Cintra, who rode faster than the soldiers, and reached it in time to give the young prince warning. He thus escaped from the trap laid for him, and went straight to Lisbon, to his mother, whom he had not seen for a long time. The queen kept him with her for a while, and spoke to him very seriously of his duty to the king, his father; and so dismissed him.

The most violent of the king's counsellors instigated him to punish this interference of the queen's as virtually abetting the young prince in his rebellion. Dionysius, still smarting under his late disappointment, too readily listened to the evil counsels of his courtiers, and sent Elisabeth an order to remove at once to

Alanguera, at the same time depriving her of all her sources of income. This bitter trial found our holy queen prepared for the will of God. She at once obeyed the peremptory orders of her husband, and abandoned her court at Lisbon. Presently, numbers of the nobility flocked to her new residence, to offer her their castles for a home, and their swords to regain her rights. She thanked them very graciously for their good intentions, but declined all their offers, alleging her resolution to remain at the absolute disposal of the king. So dismissing her impetuous defenders, she collected about her a number of pious women, who passed their time with her, in fasting and abstinence, in prayer and the public recitation of the praises of God. By and by, her humility and moderation were acknowledged by the king, and she was restored to her rights as his queen.

But the war with the Infante still continued, to the bitter grief of the queen. Coimbra was held by her son, and his father was besieging it. Elisabeth had influence enough to bring about a meeting between them at Lieria, where the prince made an apology for his conduct, renewed his fealty to his father, and received back his income.

Jealousies subsequently arising again between them, the king rode out of Lisbon one day, to meet his son, and to forbid him to enter the city. The result was a fight between their respective followers. Elisabeth,

hearing of it, rode out on a mule, into the thickest of the fray; none of her ladies ventured to follow her, yet she pushed on alone, through the storm of darts and stones, till she found the king; and then to the other side, in quest of the prince. She brought them once more together; the young Infante submitted, and kissed his father's hand; the king gave him his blessing, and so they parted, finally reconciled, at the instance of this heroic lady.

CHAPTER III.

The queen's religious observances.—Her love of fasting.—Her charities.—Her industrial school at Santarem.

THE practice of religious duties was by no means the least arduous part of Elisabeth's daily life. She carried it far beyond the limits of mere obligation, impelled to what must appear to many good people to have been excessive, by the ardour of her devotional feeling, and by her profound spirit of penitence. Not satisfied with reciting the Divine Office every day, as it is in the Breviary, this holy queen also daily recited the Office of the Blessed Virgin and of the Dead. She carried about with her on her journeys, a portable oratory, in charge of her chaplains and her clerks, who chanted high mass every day in her presence. She also

attended the service of vespers, every afternoon, in her oratory.

But the extent to which she carried the practice of fasting seems to belong rather to the cloister of a severe order than to the court of a reigning sovereign. During her husband's life she was not permitted to carry the severity of her practice as far as she wished, but was obliged to restrict herself to three fast days in the week, and to Lent and Advent, and the eves of saints. When she became free to follow her own inclination in this respect, she kept every Friday and Saturday in the year, and the vigils of the Apostles, of the Holy Virgin, and of the saints to whom she had a special devotion, as fast-days, on bread and water. In like manner, besides Advent and Lent, she observed an additional Lent in the year, from St. John Baptist's day (June 24) to the Assumption; and yet a third, called the Lent of the Angels, from the Assumption till St. Michael's day. There could not have been thirty days in the year on which she tasted anything better than bread and water.

Her piety also frequently incited her to visit holy places, and churches served by religious communities distinguished for their devout lives. The poor in the neighbourhood of these places, and all along the road to them, reaped a rich harvest from her bounty at such times; indeed, such was the reputation of her sanctity, that many persons used to feign poverty for

the occasion, in order to receive a trifle from her hands. The queen was a constant visitor of the sick, smoothing their pillows for them, and prescribing for their maladies, for she had some skill that way. Among her poor friends, she manifested especial compassion for those who were too highspirited or too *é* y to ask for alms; she said that they were often worse off than the poor; and many of them she had the happiness of restoring to competence and their former position in society. She conferred many favours on poor young women, by clothing them, and settling dowries upon them to facilitate their marriage. And all this was accomplished with as much secrecy as was possible. For this holy lady shrank from the whisper of her own praises.

In her many journeys about her kingdom, no sick or poor person and no prisoner had to complain of being overlooked by the queen in her charities and her alms. Nor among the useful applications of her income did she refuse to reckon assistance given to various public works; such as churches, hospitals, bridges, and fountains. Nothing, in short, that had for its object the good of her people, failed to secure her co-operation.

During Holy Week, she redoubled her alms and her works of mercy. On Maunday Thursday, she washed the feet of poor women; the following day, she distributed alms among a multitude of the poor; and

while attending the services of Good Friday, she manifested the grief of her soul at the remembrance of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. The practice of frequently communicating was not so common as it is now; we must therefore not be surprised to be told that Elisabeth received holy communion only three times in the year, at Christmas, Easter, and at Pentecost. It would be well if some of our daily communicants approached a little more nearly the perfection of her Christian life.

Among the religious foundations which owed their endowment to the charity of the queen, there was one which has an especial interest for us, as it seems to have anticipated the application of industrial training to the education of poor children,—a principle which has received the highest sanction in our own day. The bishop of Eidania, an episcopal see afterwards translated to Guarda, had begun to build an hospital for the poor foundlings, in the town of Santarem; but finding himself on his death-bed before the hospital was finished, he entreated the queen to take it under her patronage, and fulfil his intentions, for the love of God. Elisabeth readily undertook the duty thus bequeathed to her. The hospital was enlarged, and more amply endowed; and became the home of poor foundlings. When the queen went down to visit them, she served them at table with her own hands.

Under her directions, as soon as the children were

old enough, they were taught useful trades, by which they might earn their livelihood ; and as soon as they were able to do so, they ceased to be a burden on the house, until they fell sick, when the hospital again took charge of them.

CHAPTER IV.

The king dies.—The queen goes to Santiago.—Builds a convent at Coimbra, and resides near it.—Her daily life.—She goes to Estremoz, to make peace, and dies.—Her tomb.—Her canonisation.—Miracle of the Roses.—Tale of Fridolin.

SUCH was the tenour of our holy queen's married life, until it pleased God to deprive her of her husband. During the long illness which preceded his death, the queen waited on him like a domestic servant, discharging the duties of a sick nurse with unwearied affection. He died, at last, in the castle of Santarem, when the year 1325 was hardly a week old ; and was buried at the Cistercian convent of Odivellas, which he had founded, near Lisbon.

In the first hour of her widowhood, Elisabeth assumed the dress of a Franciscan nun. The following summer she made a pilgrimage to Santiago, in time to keep the festival of the apostle St. James at his tomb. At high mass on that day, celebrated by the archbishop, the queen offered her royal crown, together

with robes of the most costly kind, which she had worn at state ceremonies, the richest drinking vessels of her table, and stuffs of untold value from the looms of Portugal and of Aragon. On her return from the tomb of the apostle, she attracted vast crowds of people about her; for her reputation had preceded her, and they flocked together to see her as she passed. In going to Santiago she had avoided this, by keeping her destination secret, till she was almost within sight of the place.

At the expiry of a year from the king's death, Elisabeth is found at the convent of Odivellas, celebrating his anniversary, in company with the young king Alphonso, her son, and the nobility and clergy of the kingdom. Returning to Coimbra, where she then chiefly resided, she gave directions to have all her silk dresses, some of them richly interwoven with gold, cut up, and made into vestments, for distribution among the churches, according to the poverty of their wardrobes. Her gold plate was also broken up, to make chalices, crosses, thuribles and lamps. The remainder of her jewels she divided between her daughter-in-law Queen Beatrix, and her grand-daughters, Queen Mary of Castile, and Queen Eleanor of Aragon.

The queen had lately commenced a great undertaking at Coimbra; a convent for the nuns of St. Clare. We are told that she was an excellent judge of architecture, and frequently made suggestions which were

found to improve her architect's plans. While the building was in progress, she gathered around her a few pious women, who wished to devote themselves to the service of God, and in due time to enter the convent. Among them was a lady of royal blood, a cousin of the queen's, who took a large fortune with her into the convent, and became its second abbess. The church was the first part of the work that was finished. It was named after St. Clare, the disciple of St. Francis. The queen directed that her own tomb should be prepared in it. The completion of the refectory, the dormitory, the infirmary, and the kitchen soon followed, and the whole was surrounded with a high wall. In the immediate neighbourhood of the convent, a suitable residence was built for the queen and her attendants, and close to it a chapel, and two hospitals, one for fifteen poor men, and the other for a similar number of poor women.

When the whole establishment was finished, the queen took serious counsel with her advisers, as to her own future life, whether she would do better to enter the convent herself, or remain without, dispensing her charities among numbers of the indigent. Her advisers represented to her, that in the circumstances of the case, she would do more good by serving God in the world. She at once resigned her favourite plan of becoming a daughter of St. Clare, and made her arrangements accordingly. The day when the nuns

took possession of their new convent, Elisabeth and her daughter-in-law, Queen Beatrix, by special permission obtained from Rome, were present in the refectory. When the nuns were all seated, the queens carried their food from the kitchen, and served it to them at table.

Elisabeth then took up her residence in the new buildings close by. She spent much of her time in the church and among the nuns, singing the Divine Office with them every day, and encouraging them in the service of God. The neighbouring hospitals supplied her with many opportunities of active duty among the sick. This mode of life began about six years after her husband's death.

Let us follow her through one of her ordinary days. Five of the nuns of St. Clare resided with her; she rose with them before dawn, to recite matins, lauds and prime. After prime, they prepared the altar in the queen's private oratory, for mass. When this private mass was finished, the queen repaired to the chapel of her residence, where two high masses in succession were sung in her presence, her household also attending. One of these masses was always a mass of requiem for the soul of her husband. By the time that they were finished, and the rest of the Hours sung, it was the hour for going to dinner.

After dinner the queen gave audience to all sorts of people, who had business with her; to the super-

intendents of her works in various places, to religious or to secular persons, who had petitions to present; in short, to all, whether rich or poor, who had a mind to address her on any subject. The principles of the largest charity regulated her reception of persons who frequented her levees.

In the afternoon, vespers were sung in her chapel; and when it was not a fast-day (which was not often), the queen went to supper. This repast was immediately followed by Compline, and the Office of the Dead. Then she retired to her bed-chamber, and her nuns and her household to theirs. But this pious soul did not retire to sleep. She generally spent the greater part of the night in meditation and prayer, and often rose from bed to resume her spiritual exercises. So strong is the yearning of holy souls towards that place where their communion with their Lord is subject to no interruption from the demands of nature for repose; where there is no night, because there is no weary body to repair, no exhausted spirits to renovate.

The last year but one of her life the queen once more visited the tomb of St. James at Santiago; but this time she went on foot, with few attendants, dressed like a poor pilgrim, and begging her way along the road, from house to house, both going and returning;—an astonishing effort for a woman sixty-four years of age. By this means she escaped the

THE LIFE OF SAINT ELISABETH,

crowds which had distressed her humility on her former journey.

A great opportunity for the inexhaustible charity of the queen occurred, while she was residing at her convent, near Coimbra. Her kingdom was visited by a famine, which destroyed numbers of the poor. The liberality of Elisabeth was so profuse, in her efforts to mitigate the sufferings of her people, as to provoke the remonstrances of her attendants that she left nothing for herself and her household.

The latest act of her beautiful life was faithful to the spirit of peace which it had been her mission, for more than fifty years, to propagate among the crowned heads of the Spanish peninsula. The rumour reached her in her retreat at Coimbra that her son, Alphonso of Portugal, was about to plunge the kingdom in the disasters of war, in consequence of a quarrel with her grandson, Alphonso of Castile. Her immediate impulse was to sacrifice the calm routine of her life, and set out at once in search of the belligerents, with the intention of using her old influence to promote peace. Her attendants urged the inexpediency of her undertaking a long journey, during the hot season, and at her advanced age. But in such a cause no difficulties could turn her from her purpose. In this her last effort she received the crown of her many virtues.

She had got as far as Estremoz when the king, her

son, met her ; but here she was taken ill with a tumour in her arm. On the Monday after, she was unable to rise for mass, Queen Beatrix, her daughter-in-law, attended her very carefully, rallying her spirits, and doing all she could to cheer her mother, and alleviate her sufferings. While Queen Beatrix was sitting by the invalid's bed, Elisabeth suddenly turning to her companion, said, " My daughter, pray give place to this lady who is coming." " What lady, my august mother ?" was the answer of Beatrix, who saw no one. " That is she," rejoined the sick queen, " who is coming to me, in a white dress." Still Queen Beatrix could see nothing. Neither did Elisabeth say more ; they were therefore left to conjecture that the Mother of Jesus was near, to comfort her sick daughter, who had always cherished a warm affection for the Queen of Angels.

On the Thursday the queen saw her confessor early in the morning, and heard mass in her chamber. When it was finished, she rose without assistance, and went out of her chamber to the altar where her confessor was then saying mass, and kneeling down she received holy communion with great devotion and many tears. In the afternoon of the same day, she was conversing with the king, after vespers, and as the physicians maintained that there was no danger in her complaint, she begged her son to leave her and go to supper. He had supped already ; but he went outside

the door of her chamber with the physicians. While they were standing outside the door, the queen rose from her bed, and stood leaning against it; all of a sudden she began to sink. Her attendants called the king, who ran in, took his mother's hands and kissed them. She presently recovered a little, spoke of her fainting, and conversed awhile with the king about the princess Eleanor, her favourite grandchild, and about all her grandchildren. While they were conversing, the queen feeling her end approaching began to pray—"Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, protect me from my enemy, and receive me in the hour of my death." She then repeated the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and other prayers; and as she went on, she grew fainter and fainter, till her words were no longer audible. Thus, still praying, she ended her life of prayer in the castle of Estremoz, on Thursday, July 4th, 1336.

She had often entreated our Lord that her son might be present at her death, and even this little favour was granted her. When her holy soul had departed, her eyes and her mouth are said to have closed of their own accord.

Next day the funeral train set out to convey her precious remains to her convent at Coimbra. The journey occupied seven days, and it was regarded as something more than a natural occurrence, that, notwithstanding the great heat, the body of the queen

exhibited no signs of decay on its arrival at its last resting-place. It was laid with great ceremony in the tomb which the queen in her lifetime had prepared for it, among her nuns.

Many instances of divine interposition are recorded, in behalf of devout persons who visited that tomb, during the two following centuries. It was reserved for Leo X. at the instance of Emmanuel, king of Portugal, to permit the public honours due to a saint to be paid to Elisabeth within the city and the diocese of Coimbra; a privilege which was confirmed by Paul IV. and extended to the whole of Portugal.

The inquiries set on foot by the eminent biographer of Saints, the Carthusian Surius, for his Lives, seem to have much promoted the knowledge and the honour of Elisabeth both in Portugal and throughout the Catholic world; in fact, the collections made for him ultimately became the basis of the process of her canonisation. In 1612, the tomb of the saint was opened in presence of a commission of inquiry, consisting of clergymen and of medical men, and the body was found to be incorrupt. The decree of her canonisation was finally pronounced by Urban VIII., 1625. Innocent XII., seventy years later, changed the day of her festival to the 8th of July, on which it is now universally kept, and made the recitation of her office of obligation throughout the church. The beautiful

office in the Roman breviary is attributed to the pen of Urban VIII. himself.

St. Elisabeth is perhaps best known out of her own kingdom by the miracle of the roses—a legend which is, however, not found in the oldest biography, and which is also attributed to St. Elisabeth of Hungary, and to B. Germain Cousin, the Shepherdess of Toulouse, lately beatified. The legend relates, that on one occasion, wishing to conceal from her husband the alms she was distributing to a number of poor persons, her lap was found to be full of roses, in the winter time. Another anecdote is recorded of her, which must be familiar to some of our readers, in Schiller's tale of Fridolin. It is to the following effect:

A courtier, desirous of making mischief between Elisabeth and the king, accused her of too great intimacy with a young page. The king believed the tale, and prepared a terrible punishment for the youth. Orders were given to the workmen about a smelting furnace, to throw into the boiling metal the first messenger who should come to them from the king, on a particular morning. The page was accordingly directed to go to the furnace, and ask the men if the royal order had been obeyed. As he hastened to it, unconscious of his fate, he heard a chapel bell in the forest tinkling for mass. He paused, entered the chapel, and served the mass. The king, meanwhile, impatient to hear that his orders had been obeyed,

dispatched the accuser of the page to the furnace, to make inquiry. He reached it before the young man had left the chapel, was seized by the workmen, in obedience, as they imagined, to the king's orders, and amidst vain struggles and protests was hurled into the lake of molten metal. When the page arrived, he was informed that the king's commands had been obeyed; and he hastened back with the message, to the horror and confusion of his master.

— The count stood still, an icy chill
Crept o'er each shaking limb:
“ But Robert to the wood I sent—
Hast thou not met with him ?”
“ No trace of Robert, sir, I saw,
By wood or field or road !”
“ Now,” cried the count in sudden awe.
“ This is the hand of God !”

With gentler mien than his wont had been
His servant's hand he took,
And he led him to his wondering wife
With a chang'd and thoughtful look:
“ This child is pure and clean of heart—
No angel purer is:
Though I was led by treacherous art,
God and his hosts are his !”

Schiller.

NOTE.

The reader who desires more particular information, will find it in the Life of the Saint, edited by Father Conrad Janning, S. J., *Acta SS. Bolland.*, July 4th. The author of this Life, though anonymous, is presumed to have been nearly contemporary with the Saint. The MS. written in Portuguese, was found in the convent of St. Clare, at Coimbra. The learned notes of F. Janning must be received with caution, where they refer to English history; as for example, where he makes Edward IV. to reign from 1273—1307; and Edward VI., the Sovereign of England, at the queen's death in 1336! Edward I. and Edward III. would have been nearer the truth.

In Portugal, as in Spain, the name of Elisabeth, by a slight transposition of letters, is frequently called Isabella: Elisabe—Isabele—Isabella.

THE
Life of Saint Clotildis,
QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

“THE BEST THINGS THAT THE BEST BELIEVE
ARE IN HER FACE SO BRIGHTLY WRIT,
THE FAITHLESS, SEEING HER, CONCEIVE
NOT ONLY HEAVEN, BUT HOPE OF IT.”

Contents.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

- Rise of the Franks.—Clovis is their chief.—St Remi.—Clovis marries Clotildis of Burgundy.—Her narrow escape 3

CHAPTER II.

- Trials of the young queen.—Her infant children.—Battle of Tolbiac.—Vow of Clovis.—His baptism 9

CHAPTER III.

- Clovis the eldest son of the church.—He kills Alaric.—Is made a patrician of the empire.—Commences a church over the tomb of St. Geneviève at Paris.—Provincial council at Orleans.—Clovis dies.—His grandson murdered.—Story of young Clotildis.—The queen retires to Tours.—Her death 14

THE LIFE OF

ST. CLOTILDIS, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

CHAPTER I.

Rise of the Franks.—Clovis is their chief.—St. Remi.—Clovis marries Clotildis of Burgundy.—Her narrow escape.

THE cradle of the German tribe celebrated in history as the Franks, or the Freemen, lay to the east of the Rhine, in the country bounded by the Maine and the Weser, and now divided into Nassau, Hesse-Cassel, Westphalia, and part of Hanover. Two centuries and a half after Christ, they are found making frequent excursions across the Rhine, partly in search of plunder, partly of adventure. The Roman governors of Gaul had enough to do to keep them at bay, and were often glad to bargain for their services, as an advanced guard along the Rhine, to oppose the savage tribes lying to the eastward, the Vandals, the Goths, and the Huns. These hordes at length grew irrepressible, and the Franks were gradually pushed westwards before them. The last part of Gaul that remained in possession of the Romans lay to the north of the river

Loire, between the Rhine and the German ocean. To the south of the Loire the rising kingdom of Burgundy occupied the eastern part, and the Gothic tribes the western and southern parts of modern France and the Mediterranean shore.

The German tribe of the Franks by degrees overran the whole of the country between the Rhine and the Atlantic, and gave the name of France to the ancient Gallia of the Romans. As a race, however, they seem to have been chiefly confined to the modern countries of Holland and Belgium, and that part of France lying to the north of the Loire. Their other possessions, to the south of that river, partook more of the nature of a military occupation. As a race, they never fully absorbed into their own, the incongruous tribes, which were forced to yield to their arms.

The transition of the Franks from a predatory tribe into a rising nation must be assigned to the period of Clovis I., the founder of what is called the Merovingian race of kings, from their military eminence, towards the close of the fifth century (486.) On the death of his father at Tournay, then the chief seat of the tribe, Clovis found himself at their head, and although still very young, he soon made the name of the Franks terrible to his neighbours. His first great success was at Soissons, where he dealt a fatal blow to the declining power of the Romans beyond the Alps, and compelled Syagrius, the governor of Gaul, to take

refuge at Toulouse with Alaric, chief of the Visigoths. Flushed with success, Clovis sent an imperative command to Alaric to deliver up the fugitive ; a command which the barbarian felt it most prudent to obey. Syagrius was sent back a prisoner, and after awhile was secretly put to death by the terrible Frank. From Soissons Clovis fought his way to the Seine, and thence as far as the Loire. Idolater as he was, he had policy enough to make him respect the Christian institutions which he found in his way ; and from his experience of the difficulty of repressing the rapacious habits of his followers, he generally contrived to avoid the large towns on his route, where the property of the Christian church was chiefly accumulated. In this way he refrained from entering the town of Rheims, at that time the residence of St. Remi. Some of the Frank soldiers, however, not so scrupulous, managed to pillage the church, and, among their booty, to carry off a vase of exquisite workmanship. The bishop sent a deputation of his clergy to Clovis, to request the restoration of this treasure. The chief received them with courtesy, invited them to follow him to Soissons, where the booty was collected, and compelled the thief to restore what he had taken.

An attack of the Thuringians, a German tribe to the eastward of the Weser, on the Frank possessions beyond the Rhine, next occupied the military talent of Clovis. As before with the Romans, he again drove

everything before him, and made his name feared from the Weser to the Pyrenees.

It now became part of the policy of Clovis to ally himself by marriage with a princess of some Gallic family. He had already established a friendly understanding with the little court of Burgundy, as a mutual protection against their common enemy and neighbour, the formidable Alaric. The emissaries of Clovis to this court had returned to him, full of the praises of the princess Chrotildis, or Clotildis, a niece of Gon-debaud, the reigning king. Her father Chilperic, her mother, and all of her brothers but one had been dispatched by Gon-debaud, to clear his own way to the throne; he had hitherto spared the lives of his two nieces, thinking them too young to be dangerous to him. Clotildis lived at her uncle's seat; her sister Chrona was in a convent.

Although surrounded in her childhood by Arians, young Clotildis was trained in the Catholic faith; and as her character developed itself with her years, her unaffected piety added an indescribable charm to the gifts of mind and of person with which nature had endowed her. The terrible tragedy of her childhood had early taught her the vanity of rank, especially during a period of lawlessness, like the age in which she lived. The reputation of the handsome princess of Burgundy for sweetness, for innocence and for wit, made her an object of interest to neighbouring courts.

Clovis, hearing of her attractive qualities, sent another embassy to solicit the hand of the Princess Clotildis from her uncle. The guilty conscience of Gondebau^d suggested to him the risk that might attend the marriage of his niece with the king of the Franks; what if her husband should also espouse her quarrel, and vindicate her father's wrongs and her own with his terrible sword? On the other hand, the guilty man felt the danger of irritating so redoubtable a warrior as Clovis, by a refusal, to be almost equal to the danger of acceding to his request. Gondebau^d therefore temporised. He affected willingness to accept the Frank as a suitor for his niece, but raised a difficulty against the marriage of a Christian princess with an idolator. The representative of Clovis, who had by this time secured the consent of Clotildis herself, made light of this objection; and the king, reduced to his last shift, pretended to resent the acceptance which his niece had accorded to the proposal, without his concurrence. The young princess behaved with much spirit on the occasion; she longed for deliverance from the tyranny of her wicked uncle, and therefore bade the Frank ambassador urge his suit with all the energy possible, so as to anticipate the return of a courtier of her uncle's from Constantinople, who had been his accomplice in her father's murder, and who would certainly put a stop to her marriage. Gondebau^d gave way at

THE LIFE OF SAINT CLOTILDIS,

last, through fear; and the marriage having been celebrated by proxy, the young princess set out from Chalons on the Saône, in a covered cart drawn by oxen. This slow mode of travelling did not suit the anxious haste of Clotildis to get safely out of her uncle's power. She prevailed on the ambassador of her husband, who attended her, to finish the journey on horseback, and leave the cart to follow by easy stages; if she could only feel herself fairly out of Burgundy, all would be well. Her deliverance was not effected a moment too soon. The wicked counsellor of Gondebaud had meanwhile returned from his mission to the East, and had persuaded the king to annul the marriage and recall his niece. Mounted soldiers followed on her track, and seized the empty cart; but by that time Clotildis was safe across the border of Burgundy, and soon reached Soissons, where Clovis welcomed her. An hour or two, earlier or later; a mile or two, faster or slower;—on so trifling a preponderance of the balance is Providence often pleased to make the most momentous consequences depend.

CHAPTER II.

Trials of the young queen.—Her infant children.—Battle of Tolbiac.—Vow of Clovis.—His baptism.

It was a bold venture, after all, which the young fugitive had made, to become the wife of a heathen; yet she had no doubt heard enough of his respectful deference for such men as St. Remi, to make her hope the best for the effect of her influence on him. Besides, she was not by any means a solitary Christian at her husband's court. All of his Gallic subjects, that is, the natives of the country which the Franks then occupied, were Christians, although the leaven of Arianism had to a certain extent impaired the integrity of the faith of many among them. The arrival of a Catholic queen at Soissons was an event of the brightest augury for them. They indulged in the fondest hopes that the honest heart of their heathen king would submit to the influence of Christianity, as he saw its spirit so engagingly represented in his incomparable queen. Their hopes were realised in the end; but neither at the time nor in the way that those good souls had anticipated.

Clotildis sustained her difficult part with excellent tact and prudence. She made good use of opportunities when they offered, for talking quietly to her husband about religion, without offensively obtruding it on his

notice. The first evidence of her growing influence was the permission which he gave her to have their eldest child, Ingomer, baptised. Her trust in Providence must have been sorely tried, when God took her infant to himself within a week of his baptism, and when in addition to her own natural sorrow, she had to bear the reproaches of her husband as the occasion of her child's death, by subjecting it to what he considered a superstitious rite. The broken-hearted mother could only reply by declaring her thankfulness to God for having called a child of her's to his kingdom.

By the time that her second child, Clodomir, was born, Clotildis had regained sufficient influence to have him also carried to the baptismal font. Within a day or two after, he too sickened, like his brother, and Clovis, confirmed in his idea of baptism as a baneful act of magic, could only exclaim, in the bitterness of his disappointment, "Of course he must die, like his brother, since you have had him baptised." It was a moment of trial for our holy queen, hardly inferior in heaviness to that which demanded from Abraham the sacrifice of his only son. Not only the life of her child, but the chance, so to speak, of her husband's conversion was trembling in the balance. Yet she could do what alone remained for her to do. She asked from God the life of her infant as much for its father's sake as for its own, which indeed was not

small to her. Providence was satisfied with the ordeal of suspense endured by the queen; the moment of danger passed safely, and Clodomir lived to be a man.

The founder of a race of kings was not disposed, in the pride of his first success, to receive the grace of conversion. It was necessary that he should be taught the uncertain value of human glory, before he could humble himself to accept of a religious system which must for some time previously have recommended itself to his understanding. But the time for his conversion was advancing, and at last arrived, in the following manner.

The Allemanni, a warlike tribe of Germany, occupying the right, or eastern bank of the Upper Rhine, between the lake of Constance and Mayence, crossed the river (496), and attacked Cologne. The Franks in that part of the country lived under Sigebert, with whom Clovis at once made common cause, and gave the invaders battle at Tolbiac. The fortune of war seemed on the point of deserting the standard of Clovis; his army was hard pressed, and himself in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. When hopeless rout was impending on the Franks, Clovis cried out in his agony, invoking Jesus Christ, whom Clotildis said was the Son of the living God, and vowed that if he gained the day, he would worship this

Jesus, and be baptised in his name. It was a blind sort of venture, thus to stake truth or falsehood on the chance of a battle; yet his rude heart probably intended well; and after the tide of war had turned in his favour, he set about fulfilling his vow in earnest. Passing by Toul on his return home, he took along with him St. Vedast, a holy priest, to instruct him in the Christian religion. Queen Clotildis met him at Rheims with a grateful heart, and St. Remi was invited to admit the king to the rite of baptism. A difficulty yet remained. The Franks were devoted to their idols, and Clovis feared to shake their allegiance to himself if he offered any violence to the objects of their false worship. On the remonstrance of Remi, however, he called his army together, related to them the particulars of his vow on the day of danger before the enemy, and urged them to renounce their idols which had been unable to help them in emergency. They did not wait till he had finished speaking, but cried out, to a man, "We renounce them, and will adore the Incarnate God, whom Remi proclaims." It was then arranged that the ceremony of baptism should be performed on the eve of Christmas, in the church of St. Martin, outside the gates of the town (496).

When the auspicious day arrived, a long and beautiful procession wound through the streets of Rheims, singing hymns of joy, till it reached the church, which

had been sumptuously decorated for the occasion. St. Remi led Clovis by the hand ; Clotildis followed, with an overflowing heart, leading two sisters of her husband. No doubt she felt that the blessed spirit of her little Ingomer was not far off on that day ; his bitter death had been the sowing-time of this harvest of recompense. The procession closed with three thousand Frank soldiers, the first-fruits of their nation to the gospel. On the way, Clovis turned to the bishop and asked him, " My father, is this the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which you have promised to me ?"—" No, my prince," replied St. Remi, " it is only the way that leads to it."

When they had reached the font, the bishop addressed the royal convert, " Bow thy head, O proud Sygambrian, beneath the yoke of the Lord ; worship what thou hast heretofore burnt, and burn what thou hast worshipped." He then baptised the king in the name of the Holy Trinity, and anointed him with chrism. Albofledis, one of the king's sisters, was also baptised ; the other, who was already a Christian, but had adopted the Arian creed, was received back to Catholic communion. The brave men, who were companions of the king in the graces of that day, were baptised by the bishops and the clergy whom the great event had brought in numbers to Rheims. The whole of the following week was devoted to the completion of the king's instruction in religion. It is reported that while

Remi was reading to him the Passion of our Lord, the soldiers' nature broke forth in this exclamation, "If I had only been there with my Franks to avenge him!"

CHAPTER III.

Clovis the Eldest Son of the Church.—He kills Alaric.—Is made a Patrician of the Empire.—Commences a church over the tomb of St. Geneviève at Paris.—Provincial Council at Orléans.—Clovis dies.—His grandson murdered.—Story of young Clotildis.—The queen retires to Tours.—Her death.

THE conversion of Clovis and of his companions gave sincere joy throughout the Christian world. The Pope wrote to congratulate him on the great event. The share which St. Remi had in it procured for him the title of the Apostle of the Franks, as St. Martin, a century earlier, was called the Apostle of the Gallic nation. In fact, at that period, Clovis was the only Catholic sovereign in existence. The emperor was a Eutychian; the kings of the Vandals in Africa, of the Visigoths in Spain and Aquitaine, of the Ostrogoths in Italy, and of the people of Burgundy, were all Arians. The conversion of the Franks happening about a century earlier than the arrival of St. Augustine among the Anglo-Saxons in England, the king of the French

nation used to call himself the Eldest son of the Church.

With the zeal of a neophyte, Clovis made strong and successful appeals to the body of the French nation to imitate his example, and abandon their idols. Before long, he had the pleasure of witnessing the conversion of nearly the whole of his people. Those of them who still remained unchanged, retired into Belgium, under a prince of the Franks who resided near Cambrai; and, indeed, part of the Belgian population remained pagan, till the time of St. Bernard.

Clovis also became an apt scholar of his holy wife, in works of Christian charity, in building and endowing churches, in relieving the poor, and in maintaining widows and orphans. When he had occasion to move his army in the neighbourhood of churches or monasteries, he was more than ever strict in enforcing their immunity from plunder.

It must be confessed, however, with the most impartial historians, that the love of dominion and of conquest was little changed in the Frank king by his conversion. Only, when acts of injustice were successfully achieved, of which the pagan would have thought no more, the Christian king set about making reparation for them, by munificent gifts to religion. He made the profession of Arianism, maintained by Alaric, an apology for attacking the kingdom of the Visigoths; in reality, however, burning with desire to

plunder it for his own benefit. He defeated and killed Alaric in a pitched battle near Poitiers, and seized his treasury at Toulouse ; and but for the threatening attitude of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, the royal treasury at Carcassonne would have shared the same fate.

By way of compensation, Clovis made rich presents to the church of St. Hilary at Poitiers, and of St. Martin at Tours ; and, on his return home, he fulfilled a vow which he had made before leaving it, to commence the erection of a church over the tomb of St. Geneviève at Paris, in honour of St. Peter and Paul ; an edifice to which Clotildis put a finishing hand.

About the same time, the Roman emperor, Anastasius, paid the Frank king the high compliment of sending him the purple robe which distinguished a patrician, or a high nobleman of the empire. He assumed the badge of his new dignity at the tomb of St. Martin, outside the gate of Tours, and thence rode in state to the Cathedral, wearing a circlet of gold on his head, and scattering largesse to the people as he went along.

The close of his reign was dishonoured by the treacherous murder of several princes of his family in Austrasia, whom he desired to put out of the way, that the sovereignty might without fail descend to his own sons. His inordinate ambition satisfied, he had leisure to repent of what he had done, and to make

such reparation as he could for his crimes. The last year of his life, a numerous council of bishops assembled at Orleans, consisting of five metropolitans, or archbishops, and twenty-seven suffragans. The king co-operated with them in securing the stability of the rising French church. He died the same year (511), at Paris, and was interred in his new church, which afterwards became celebrated, under the name of the virgin St. Geneviève.

Three sons of Clovis and of St. Clotildis survived their father, together with a fourth son of Clovis, born before his marriage with Clotildis. They divided the kingdom among them; the towns of Metz, Soissons, Paris and Orleans being their respective capitals. For some years they lived in peace. The queen dowager spent a great part of her time at Tours, devoted to good works and the daily worship of God, in the church of St. Martin.

By and by, however, the French kings were again involved in war with their neighbours. Clodomir, the eldest, fell in an engagement with the king of Burgundy, leaving three young sons, whose rights to their father's share of the kingdom obtained no respect from their uncles. The unhappy children were educated by their grandmother, Clotildis, who also removed to Paris, that she might more readily promote their interests, and prevail on their uncles to do them justice.

The saint's surviving sons, jealous of the interest that she took in the young princes, and fearing that her influence might oblige restitution of their patrimony, obtained possession of their persons by stratagem, and put two of them to death ; the third, Clodoald or Cloud, escaping, afterwards entered into holy orders, and lived and died in a pious manner, in the neighbourhood of Paris, where, in later times, a church and a royal residence received his name of St. Cloud, in deference to the local estimation which he enjoyed as a saint. The disconsolate queen recovered the bodies of her grandchildren, and gave them a royal funeral in the new church of St. Geneviève at Paris.

Our Saint was destined to suffer another and still more cruel family affliction, in the person of her only daughter, Clotildis, who was married to Amalaric, king of the Visigoths. The young princess was a sincere Catholic, while her husband had the misfortune to be an Arian. This marriage of policy turned out a very miserable one. Amalaric insisted on his wife conforming to his religion ; she refused, and had to submit, in consequence, to the most savage treatment from the king, and even to the lowest indignities from her people, as she went to public worship in her own church. She at length appealed to her brother Childebert, king of Paris, and as a token, sent him a handkerchief dyed with her blood. The prince did not

hesitate a moment. He entered Narbonne, the Visigoth capital, with an armed force, seized the treasury, and killed Amalaric as he tried to escape.

This act of summary justice accomplished, he set out in triumph for Paris, taking his unhappy sister along with him; but she expired on the road, of the severe injuries she had received.

Thus, on the whole, the life of our Saint, in that lawless time, had been a painful one. The massacre of her own family, when she was a child; the death of her husband, the murder of her grandsons, and now the premature death of her only daughter, had nearly filled her cup of bitterness to the brim. But from this point, the closing years of her pilgrimage on earth were passed in comparative repose. She spent much of her time at Tours, in penitential observances and in continual prayer. Such property as she possessed was divided among the poor, and the followers of voluntary poverty in the religious orders. She built several houses for these in various parts of France, more particularly at Rheims, at Tours, and at Rouen.

Old age found her engaged in these works of charity and of piety. During one of her visits to Tours, she received an intimation from a heavenly messenger that the day of her summons hence was very near. In the exuberant joy of her heart, she cried out, "Unto thee, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul; come and deliver me; O Lord I have trusted in thee." An attack of

illness confined her to bed, but alms and prayer continued to be her constant employment. She sent for her two sons from Paris and from Soissons, to come and see her die. They came at her bidding, and she foretold to them many events which were about to happen. On the thirtieth day after the summons of the angel, she was anointed, and then received the sacred viaticum, according to the usual order at that time, and for many ages subsequently. Then declaring her belief in the Most Holy Trinity, she passed away from the scene of her many trials to everlasting rest, the 3rd of June, 545. Her departure took place in the night; yet we are told that her chamber shone as if it had been noonday; and that the brightness lasted till daybreak. Her sons conveyed the body of the queen to Paris, and laid it beside her husband, in the church of St. Geneviève; from which they were afterwards removed to the royal mausoleum at St Denys.

THE
Life of Saint Radegund,
QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

" AND GRIEF, TOO, HELD HER VIGIL THERE;
WITH UNRELENTING SWAY
BREAKING MY AIRY VISIONS DOWN,
THROWING MY FLOWERS AWAY:—
I OWE TO HER FOND CARE ALONE
THAT I MAY NOW BE ALL THINE OWN."

Contents.

Radegund, a princess of Thuringia.—Becomes the captive of Clotaire I., king of the Franks,—afterwards his queen.—They separate.—Her convent at Poitiers.—Hymn *Vexilla*.—Her illness and death.—Story of St. Junian.—Charles VII. of France.

THE LIFE OF ST. RADEGUND, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

Radegund, a princess of Thuringia.—Becomes the captive of Clotaire I., king of the Franks,—afterwards his queen.—They separate.—Her convent at Poitiers.—Hymn *Vexilla*.—Her illness and death.—Story of St. Junian.—Charles VII. of France.

THURINGIA, the native country of St. Radegund, embraced the territory beyond the Rhine, lying between the Weser and the Oder. At the death of king Basinus, it was divided among his three sons. Hermanfried, the most powerful and the most ambitious of the three, coveted the possessions of his brothers. Goaded on by the taunts of his unscrupulous queen, a niece of the Gothic sovereign, Theodoric, he assassinated his brother Berthaire, and only waited for a good opportunity of putting Balderic, the survivor, out of the way. At that time, Thierry, the eldest son of Clovis, king of the Franks, reigned at Metz, over the territory now comprehended in Lorraine, Champagne, Belgium, and the Rhenish provinces of Prussia. Hermanfried entered into an alliance with Thierry, for the infamous purpose of wresting the remaining portion of

Thuringia from his brother, Balderic, by the sword. Their wicked project succeeded ; but, as often happens among unprincipled men, when associated for an evil object, Hermanfried overreached his ally in the bargain they had struck, about the territory which Thierry was to acquire as the price of his co-operation. The Frank king dissembled his indignation, and his purpose of revenge, until the death of Theodoric, the king of the Goths, with whom he wished to avoid a collision (526). Thierry then called his brother, Clotaire I., from Soissons to his aid ; they entered Thuringia together, and inflicted a cruel chastisement on the perfidious Hermanfried ; devastating the country with fire and sword, and carrying off much valuable booty and many prisoners of war.

Clotaire obtained, as part of his share in the adventure, a young prince and princess, the orphan children of Berthaire. Radegund and her little brother, after seeing their home made desolate by their wicked uncle, were now torn from their native country, and carried to Soissons, as captives and slaves of the Frank king, Clotaire (531).

Though tall of her age, Radegund was still a child. The horrors she had already passed through had stamped on her beautiful face an expression of wild and of bitter sorrow, rarely seen in one so young. Clotaire admired her childish beauty, and with the desire of educating her for his future queen, sent her

to reside at Athie, in Picardy, his country seat on the Somme. In this retired and genial spot, the little princess soon made rapid progress in her studies, under competent instructors, and by degrees became more reconciled to the sad vicissitudes of her life; the light of the gospel, too, began slowly to dispel the heathen darkness of her childhood. The day of her baptism was to her the beginning of a new and a nobler life, in which the imitation of Jesus Christ seems to have always formed the guiding principle of her conduct.

Time glided insensibly away, and young Radegund reached her nineteenth year (538). A message from Clotaire then summoned her to Vitry, in Belgium, to become his queen. The licentious man was not worthy of her. His private life was defaced by the worst vices of his yet half-savage race. But his will was absolute law for his dependents; and in spite of her aversion, the young Thuringian princess was compelled to assume the rank of queen-consort to this wicked man. She was already no novice in the practice of submission to the roughest discipline; but all her past training was necessary to support her in the life of trial now before her. The love of prayer, of austerities, and of the poor, which she had learnt at Athie, stood her in good stead now. Yet, with all her endeavours, she failed to secure the love of her lawless husband, who used to declare that she turned his court into a cloister.

His courtiers encouraged these unjust reproaches of the king; violent scenes ensued, from which the patience of the unhappy queen afforded her no protection; her only friend in that courtly circle, her brother, fell a victim to the cruelty of Clotaire; and his death filled up the measure of our saint's heavy trials.

Radegund had now passed six years of anxious struggle. Worn out with the contest, she solicited permission to retire from court, and assume the habit of a nun.* Clotaire was only too glad to get rid of her on such easy terms. It was arranged that she should commence her new life at Noyon, under the sanction of St. Medard, the bishop. She afterwards retired in her religious character to Saix, one of the royal residences in Poitou, where she at once adopted a severely penitential course of life. In no long time, however, the danger which naturally impends over such an arrangement as she had recently made, actually happened: Clotaire repented the dismissal of his beautiful queen, and news reached her that he was on his

* The mutual abandonment of conjugal duties and rights, although sometimes permitted, cannot be said to be encouraged by the Church. Since the age of our Saint, new safeguards have been interposed. Not only must the consent of both parties be given, as, indeed, was necessary then, but both parties must now embrace the religious life, with the option to the husband of entering into holy orders.

way to Saix to reclaim her. She escaped with her companions to Poitiers, and, from the church of St. Hilary, wrote a letter to the king, imploring him to regard her for the future as dead to him. She prevailed, and soon after laid the foundation of a convent at Poitiers. A second time the king altered his mind, and insisted on Radegund's returning to his court. It required all the influence of Germanus, bishop of Paris, supported by threats of the vengeance of St. Martin, whom the Franks had learnt from the Gauls to revere, to make the king change his purpose. He ultimately died in possession of the entire kingdom of his father, and not before he had an opportunity of making such amends as were possible for his licentious life (561).

The Council of Tours, (566) formally placed the young convent of St. Radegund under its protection. By and by it assumed the name of St. Croix, in honour of a relic of the Holy Cross, which the emperor Justin sent to the convent at the request of the queen. Her friend, Venantius Fortunatus, afterwards bishop of Poitiers, composed on the occasion the hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, nearly in the form in which it is still found in the Breviary, on Passion Sunday.

The latest incident in our Saint's active life was a journey to Arles, undertaken for the purpose of more complete initiation into the Rule which she had adopted for her nuns. At the feet of the illustrious abbess Cæsaria, Radegund acquired the necessary in-

struction ; and returned to Poitiers, to put the finishing touches to the work of her life.

As our Saint approached its termination, and saw her task on earth accomplished in the permanent establishment of her nuns, she often begged our Lord to call her to Himself. One day, while she was praying in her oratory more fervently than usual, a youth of glorious appearance stood before her, and, shewing her his pierced hands and feet, from which issued rays of light more dazzling than the sun's, thus addressed her :—“O soul which I have redeemed, what is it that you ask of me ? Why so many tears, and sighs, and prayers ? See ! I am always by your side, and very soon you shall know what the joys of heaven are, for you are a pearl of great price, and one of the most precious jewels in My crown.”—“But why, O my Lord,” rejoined the weeping saint, “do you bestow such a favour as this on me who am so unworthy ?”—“Do not speak so, my child,” answered her Lord ; “I grant My favours to whom I will, and to whom I know it to be best to do so. To doubt this, would be to offend against faith and hope.”

All through the first half of the year 587, St. Radegund lost strength daily, and her nuns plainly perceived that they must soon lose their beloved mother. Yet, to the last, she continued her practices of severe penance, she discharged, as usual, the most menial duties in the house, and she deprived her poor body of

food and of sleep. On the 12th of August, nature gave way, and the dying saint was unable to rise from the couch of sackcloth and ashes on which she usually snatched a little repose. Her nuns gathered about her, to pay her the last offices of love, and to learn how a saint could die. She bade them be comforted for her departure, and promised that in heart and in thought she would still remain with them. She received with overflowing devotion the last sacraments of the dying; and after the rite, she lay in profound meditation till the evening; when all at once she began to discourse to her spiritual children with singular fluency and abundance, in words of the tenderest piety, chiefly supplied by her memory from her daily reading in the Gospels, in the Psalms of David, and in the writings of the holy fathers.

At night the saint relapsed into silence; but her eyes, and every portion of her countenance was eloquent with joy, and a sense of victory achieved. Heaven was so near her, and so attractive, that she had not one look of regret to spare for what she was leaving behind. As morning dawned she spoke once more: "I feel no more pain.—May God bless you all.—May Mary, our mother and our advocate, protect you.—Imitate her humility and her obedience.—Despise wealth, and value poverty above everything that is precious in the world.—I am leaving my exile for my home; my labour for eternal rest in God.—See! the angels are coming

to attend me to the marriage-feast of the immaculate Lamb.—The Spouse calls me away.—*Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*" With these concluding words she gently bowed her head, and all was over. So radiant was the sunset of her cloudy and dark day.*

A singular incident is related in connexion with St. Radegund's death. A pious hermit of the name of Junian, between whom and St. Radegund there subsisted a holy friendship, had arranged with her, many years before, that whichever of them survived should receive the very earliest intelligence of the death of the other, that the survivor might pray for the departed. The moment that our saint expired, a messenger was despatched with the news to a place called Chaunay, a favourite resort of St. Junian. Exactly half way between Chaunay and St. Croix, the messenger from St. Croix met a messenger from Chaunay, on his way to communicate to St. Radegund the news of St. Junian's death. A priory, called La Troussaie, was afterwards erected on the spot where the messengers met.

The bishop of Poitiers was absent on a journey when the abbess of St. Croix expired. St. Gregory was therefore invited from Tours by her nuns to come and assist

* Within these few years a pious lady, reduced by illness to the last extremity of weakness, suddenly raised herself in her dying bed, and stretching out her arms, with a beaming countenance exclaimed, "I see the sceptre of His love! Take me to Him! take me to Him!" and, sinking back, expired.

them in laying her in the tomb. He has left in writing an affecting narrative of the whole ceremony, in which the natural grief of all who were present was strangely mingled with supernatural attestations of the beatitude of the departed soul. Crowds came to visit her tomb, out of devotion to her memory, and to supplicate for temporal and spiritual blessings; and none of her clients seem to have left the place with a wish unfulfilled. To the saint's intercession, the recovery of Anjou and Maine, of Normandy and of Guienne from the English, in the middle of the 15th century, used to be ascribed by Charles VII of France, quite as much as to the imbecility of the English government.

St. Radegund is now venerated at Poitiers as the patroness of the town. Her biography has been written by the illustrious Fortunatus, her contemporary and friend; by Baudonivia, one of her nuns; and by Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, from the archives of her convent. St. Gregory of Tours, who highly esteemed her, from personal knowledge, has inserted her panegyric in several of his works.

The tomb of the saint was violated, and her bones burnt by the French Calvinists (1562), but her convent, after sustaining various losses in the great revolution, still survives.

A convent bearing her name once stood on the site of Jesus College, Cambridge; a row of houses in the neighbourhood is still called Radegund Buildings.

DESCENT OF FRANK KINGS FROM CLOVIS I.

Clovis I. died 511.—St. Clotildis.

|

Clotaire I. died 561.—St. Radegund.

|

Chilperic I. died 584.

|

Clotaire II. died 628.

|

Dagobert I. died 638.

|

Clovis II.—St. Bathilda.

THE
Life of Saint Bathildis,
QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

“ SHAPED HER HEART WITH WOMAN'S MEEKNESS
TO ALL DUTIES OF HER RANK:
AND A GENTLE CONSORT MADE HE,
AND HER GENTLE MIND WAS SUCH
THAT SHE GREW A NOBLE LADY,
AND THE PEOPLE LOVED HER MUCH.”

Contents.

CHAP. I.

Two provinces of the Franks.—Reign of Dagobert I.— The office of Mayor of the Palace.—Bathildis, an English slave—is married to Clovis II.—He dies	3
--	---

CHAP. II.

Bathildis is Regent.—Her humane acts.—Her convents. —She resigns,—and retires.—Chelles.—Dies.—Reflections	8
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THE LIFE OF
ST. BATHILDIS
QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

CHAPTER I.

Two provinces of the Franks.—Reign of Dagobert I.—The office of Mayor of the Palace.—Bathildis, an English slave—is married to Clovis II.—He dies.

WE are not concerned to follow the fortunes of the Merovingian race of kings, step by step, as it reached its highest point of glory, and thence began to decline. But as the commencement of its history is associated with a holy queen, so the beginning of its decline also introduces the reader to another saint, Bathildis, the wife of Clovis II. In order fully to understand the particulars of her life, it will be necessary to observe a few of the more striking changes which had been brought about in the conditions of the Franks, as a nation, during the century immediately succeeding the death of St. Clotildis.

The four little provinces, (for in the modern sense it would be almost absurd to call them kingdoms,) of which the respective centres were Orleans, Paris, Soissons, and Metz, were fused into two, under the names of Austrasia and Neustria. Austrasia, or German-France, embraced the north-eastern part of ancient Gaul, of which the Franks had first made themselves masters, together with all the district of country stretching eastward to the confines of Germany and the Rhine. Its population was a shifting one; as new hordes of barbarians arrived from Germany, Frisians, Westphalians, and Saxons, they were not easily fused into the great Frank family, and thus the civilization of Austrasia was much retarded.

Neustria, or Roman-France, on the other hand, extended from the borders of the north-eastern province to the Atlantic Ocean, and towards the south, as far as the river Loire. It was the policy of Clovis, and of his successors, to make the most of this portion of their French possessions, as their ultimate design was the occupation of the whole territory of ancient Gaul. Through the failure of other branches of the race, it happened more than once in its history that the king of one of these provinces became king also of the other. Thus Clovis II. and his son, Dagobert I., the friends and patrons of St. Eloy, the goldsmith, held both provinces, and Burgundy into the bargain.

In Dagobert I. the Merovingian race of kings is

regarded as having reached its highest eminence. He was a good friend to religion, although, it must be confessed, his private life was, for a time at least, not strictly in accordance with his profession. He also laid the foundation of a system of laws for his people. From the period of his death (638,) the decline of his race is usually believed to have begun. The rapid decay of this line of kings has not escaped the remark of an eminent historian, who observes, that of the four sons of Clovis I., and again of Clotaire I., only one left issue. Most of the other kings died young men in years. They were a peculiar race. A king of the Franks was a father at fifteen, and an old man at thirty. Their sudden change from barbarism to the luxuries of comparative civilisation brought in its train habits of indulgence which proved fatal to strength and life, and at last extinguished the line altogether, in the feebleness of an effete race.

Another element in the history of the Frank kings demands notice, both as explaining another cause of their decline, and as intimately connected with the story of Bathildis. We mean the office of the Mayor of the palace, or major-domo; a kind of lord chamberlain; at first introduced by the kings, as an instrument for controlling the wealthy proprietors of land, from whom the mayor of the palace was always taken. In process of time, however, this officer found it more for his advantage to make common cause with the proprietors,

THE LIFE OF SAINT BATHILDIS,

and to control the king; thus he became at length the nominee, not of the king, but of the proprietors, who elected their favorite. In this way the family of Pepin, mayor of the palace in Austrasia, rose to power, and finally superseded in name, as it had long done in fact, the royal line of Clovis.

On the death of Dagobert I., Austrasia fell to the share of his son Sigebert II., while Neustria and Burgundy were allotted to his other son, Clovis II., then a minor; in whose name the regency was held by his mother, Nantechilde, and by d'Eghe, mayor of the palace. The chief ornament of his court were St. Eloy and his friend St. Ouen, both of them were soon afterward promoted to the mitre, at Noyon and at Rouen.

D'Eghe dying, his office at the Court of Neustria was supplied by Erchinoald; and at this point in the history of the Franks our story begins.

In one of the frequent forays, (for they merit no more dignified name,) that took place between the Franks and the inhabitants of that part of Great Britain lying next France, a young English girl was taken prisoner, carried into France, and sold as a domestic slave to Erchinoald, mayor of the palace, under Clovis II. Her name was Baltechildis, shortened into Balthildis, or Bathildis. Her sweetness and goodness under misfortune, quite as much as the cheerfulness of her beautiful countenance, and the elegance of her figure, recommended her to her master, who appointed her to

the lighter duties of waiting, as the cupbearer, at his table. She was as popular among her fellow-slaves, as she was with her master and his friends. There was no office of kindness too menial for her to perform, for the very least among them. The charm of her manners we are told, was farther heightened by a delicate reserve, which forbade familiarity, without diminishing their gracefulness.

— “ Within her face,
Humility and dignity
Were met in a most sweet embrace.”

Her master was fascinated by his beautiful slave; and at the death of his wife, Lanthilde, he offered his hand in marriage to Bathildis. It was found impossible, however, to overcome her reluctance. Young Clovis, equally attracted by the lovely English girl, was more fortunate; Bathildis accepted him, and became his queen. She carried with her into her new life of honour the same goodness that had won all hearts to her in her former lowliness. She studied her husband's wishes in everything; the poor found her a liberal friend; to the clergy she showed the deference of an affectionate daughter. She, too, like all of her blessed order, was much devoted to prayer, frequently mingling her tears with her supplications. Clovis seeing her piety, gave her a valuable assistant and guide, in his friend, abbot Genesius, through whom

she dispensed her bounty to the destitute, and to convents and churches. The good abbot rose to be bishop of Lyons in the course of time.

Her union with the king was blessed with three sons. The crown of Austrasia becoming vacant (656,) by the death of Sigebert, and the failure of his issue, Clovis succeeded to the possession of the entire kingdom of the Franks. He did not long survive this accumulation of honours, dying in November of the same year, after a reign of eighteen years, yet still a young man.

CHAPTER II.

Bathildis is Regent.—Her humane acts.—Her convents.—She resigns—and retires.—Chelles.—Dies.—Reflections.

As was usual on the death of a Frank king, one of the sons of Clovis succeeded to the crown of Neustria and of Burgundy, with the title of Clotaire III.; his brother Childeric I. became king of Austrasia; while Thierry, the youngest of the late king's sons, had to wait for fifteen years, till the death of his brother Clotaire opened up for him the succession to Neustria and Burgundy.

The Regency of her son Clotaire's share of the kingdom was held by his mother, Bathildis, assisted by Erchinoald, the mayor of the palace, her old master.

For a time all went well. The queen studied the advantage of her people in every possible way. She extinguished a poll-tax, which had been so rigorously levied as to tempt poor fathers of families to destroy their children rather than incur the penalty incident to rearing a numerous family of contributors to the odious tax. Like St. Margaret of Scotland, also, Bathildis took much to heart the abuses which had crept into religion, and she engaged the bishops to extirpate the plague of simony, which threatened to eat into the heart of the Frank church. The queen was a munificent friend to the religious houses of her kingdom. In particular, she founded two, out of her own private property; one of them at Corby, near Amiens; and the other at Chelles, near Paris, on the river Marne.

When St. Eloy gave up his holy soul to God (659), at Noyon, the queen went to see his remains, and spared no pains to secure them, as relics of a saint, for her convent at Chelles. The inhabitants of the town were equally desirous to keep them to themselves, and the queen eventually waived her claim.

To the redemption of slaves taken in war, queen Bathildis especially devoted herself, with the liberality of one who had herself known the sorrows of a captive in an enemy's land. While prisoners of war were every day sold for the benefit of their captors, the queen was a constant purchaser, more particularly when her unhappy countrymen and countrywomen were offered

for sale. Her edicts against the barbarous practice do not seem to have been much attended to.

But troubles now began to gather round our queen. Erchinoald was no longer mayor of the palace; and the ambitious and impracticable policy of his successor, Ebroin, involved the government in serious disputes with the nobles and the clergy of Neustria. The new mayor was unscrupulous as he was daring. If a bishop presumed to question his designs, the mitre was no protection against the vengeance of Ebroin. Annemond, bishop of Lyons, perished in this way; and to aggravate the crime, the mayor pretended that he had the authority of the queen for what he had done. This was not the only instance in which he attempted to compromise his royal mistress, who, feeling herself no match for her chamberlain, could only resign the regency, and retire altogether from public life (665). She bade adieu to her counsellors, forgiving those who had injured her, and asking the forgiveness of all for herself in return; and sought a home among her nuns at Chelles. Here her habitual humility again found full scope: she submitted to the abbess, as to a mother; and the sisters she regarded as her equals, or even as her superiors; for there was no duty in the house low enough or menial enough to satisfy her. She served them at their meals, and she served them in the scullery; but her favourite post of service was the infirmary. She had learnt her noviciate of charity

while she was the slave of Divine Providence ; now she perfected herself in it as the slave of the love of Jesus. Her habit of prayer, her gift of tears, followed her to Chelles, and were the crown of her holy life, as they had been its chief support.

The last fifteen years of her life were passed in this peaceful retirement. At length the end began to draw near. Her health declined, and she suffered acute pain. Yet so complete was the training of this holy woman in the school of suffering, that she made her very infirmities a subject of thanksgiving to her Lord. Shortly before her departure to eternal life, she had a vision similar to the dream of the patriarch Jacob. She beheld a ladder erected before the altar of the Blessed Virgin ; its summit was lost in heaven, and the angels of God were waiting to accompany herself in her ascent to paradise. She gathered from it an intimation that the hour of her deliverance was at hand. She seems to have confided her vision to a few persons only, and to have begged that it might be kept secret from the good abbess and her nuns, knowing the grief that such an intimation would occasion them ; neither was her humility willing to make a boast of the assurance of her heavenly reward, with which she had been favoured. She applied herself more assiduously than ever to prayer, waiting from day to day, with great humility and contrition of heart, the pleasure of her gracious Lord. A young godchild of hers,

aged six years, was invited by the saint to accompany her to heaven, and took leave of the world a short time before herself. Finally, the saint, resigning her soul into the protection of Jesus, with her eyes and her hands raised to heaven, departed in great peace, January 30th, 680. A supernatural light is said to have pervaded her chamber at the moment of her passage. Few persons were aware of it, so well had her secret been kept. The grief of her nuns was great in proportion to its suddenness, on hearing that their treasure, for so they regarded her, had been taken from them. Commending her precious soul with many tears to their heavenly master, they buried their beloved friend with great reverence and honour.

Her contemporary biographer sums up her character in few words, as a striking example of the union of humility with wisdom, of meekness, and amiability, and even excessive compassion, with the most vigilant prudence, and delicacy the most pure. All her actions were the fruit, not of impulse, but of well-concerted method.

A succession of miraculous cures at her tomb attested the stamp of approbation which Almighty God had put on her life and her holy death. Her remains were long preserved as reliques at Chelles, and a part of them at Corby. A hundred and fifty years after her death, they were translated into a more distinguished shrine.

Distance of time makes events, which in their day

seemed long separated, appear as if they were almost coincident. Distance of place has a similar effect on objects of vision. Two stars, millions, perhaps billions of miles apart, shall seem as if they shone together as one, if you only recede far enough away from them. We read, on one page, of our saint's trials as a slave; on the next, of her trials as a queen. A page or two further on, we come to the end of all her trials, and the commencement of her reward. Doubtless, as she regards all these events now, from her seat of bliss in heaven, they must appear as transient, as virtually coincident as they do to us in reading of them, twelve centuries after their occurrence. But they were by no means so closely united, while they were actually and slowly passing. Each day of slavery, of separation from her native land, seemed as long to her, then, as any day of suffering still seems to us now. Faith and hope alone can thus bring the beginning and the end together, and so blend the endurance of the conflict with the enjoyment of the crown, as to make the heaviest trials appear light, and the longest, "but for a moment," even while they are actually weighing on the human spirit. This is an important lesson, resulting especially from the study of the lives of saints who were, more remarkably than others, "made perfect through suffering."

DESCENT OF THE FRANK KINGS FROM CLOVIS I.

Clovis I. died 511.—St. Clotildis.

Clotaire I. died 561.

Chilperic I. died 584.

Clotaire II. died 628.

Dagobert I. died 638.

Clovis II.—St. Bathildis.

The Lives of SS. Clotildis and Bathildis may be found at length in Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. Ben.*, Volumes I. and II. There the common error is corrected, which assigns the 26th January as the day of St. Bathildis' death, and, afterwards, of her festival.

The author has also taken as his guide, in sketching the rise and progress of the Franks, Henrion's *Histoire de France*, tome I.

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